

THE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

WIRE

ISSUE 182 • APRIL 88 • £2.00 (US \$6.50)

**Genesis
P-Orridge**

industrial
art throb

Luc Ferrari

concrète chameleon

Rhys Chatham

hard leader

**Natacha Atlas's
jukebox**

**Captain
Beefheart**

**Robin Rimbaud
on Glenn Branca**

**Vinicius
Cantuária**

**Ian Penman
on the mic**

**ARTO
LINDSAY**

THE BOY FROM BRAZIL

Adult hardcore

Simon Reynolds dissects
a breakbeat mutation



ELECTRONICA • AVANT ROCK • BREAKBEAT • JAZZ • MODERN CLASSICAL • GLOBAL

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distributed by karlsruhe music tel. +44 (0)207 880 0707 fax. +44 (0)207 252 5222 wire's +44 (0)207 252 0802 e-mail: hwa@karlsruhe-music.com

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letters

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Cave dweller

This month's Nick Cave issue (*The Wire* 181) is to my mind, an example of the magazine at its best: from cover to cover, it is interesting, beautiful, varied and informative. If it had a cover mounted CD it would have been nearly perfect. Late hours too for John Fahey and Matthew Shipp issues (174 and 168 respectively). Keep up the standards — and more Amy & Tanveer photographs please.

Richard Faith via e-mail

Ignorance is blissed out

I enjoyed Kevin Shields's Invisible Jukebox (*The Wire* 181) precisely for his ignorance of experimental music. Like most original musicians, he has served to follow his own logical path, distorting, quite literally, the fragments left over from popular forms. The two My Bloody Valentine albums still feel beautiful and exploratory in conception and outcome, those ethereal harmonies, slowed down speed guitars and hallucinogenic otherness conjuring up for me the awkwardness of submission to euphoria.

Shields (rather like Tim Burton) does not give himself to the 'personality' trait of showing off his imagined obscure superiority in interview. After all, he is not a journalist, but an artist. But what about Stereolab, similar to MBV in the passage of drone, discordance and blurred melodic undercurrent, but too obviously showing off their credentials in the blending of the weird (one noise basslines, Sun Ra synths) to the banal (Bee Gees harmonies, Canned Heat boogie)? They don't want us to lose ourselves in sound sculpture, but get an A+ for their knowledge of every piece of vinyl in the second hand record shop.

Shields should really get his head down and work, but I'm glad he's not worried about the latest genre or phase. His record collection may not be as hip or unusual as a new bar in East London, but it's certainly more worthwhile. What is that word again? Ah yes, 'Timeless'.

John Jones London

Irony free zone

In his Global Ear from San Francisco (*The Wire* 181), Edwin Pouncey failed to give *The Wire* its proper due in promoting the ravenous hipster co-optation of his precious avant-garde. Where does he suppose those "street-smart, stocking-capped turntablists" get exposed to Stockhausen in the first place? Pouncey may resent being stripped of his obscure anti-bragging rights, but a more gracious observer might take heart at the

evidence of such interest in substantive modern music. Indeed, he might discover San Francisco has more to offer musically than some used manga-bella! For a magazine that traditionally opposes such juvenile, I-was-here-first elitism, Pouncey's disgruntled complaints were a real disappointment. If his once-obscure vinyl finds are now de rigueur DJ fodder, as a regular contributor to *The Wire*, he has only himself to blame (or thank).

Andrew Martin (Los Angeles, USA)

I would like to take issue with Edwin Pouncey when he states in his Global Ear that "there is no musical corner anywhere on this planet that hasn't been thoroughly probed, listed and published". I agree with his general lament, given the all-consuming vogue for things dissonant and vaguely obscure. I nevertheless find his comment (hopelessly unintentional) somewhat emblematic of Western music journalism and its quest to document the diaspora. Speaking from my own admittedly circumscribed experience, I find it sad that very little commentary has been dedicated to underground music that exists off the plush carpeted New York-London-Berlin-Tokyo route. For instance, what about the sounds emanating from places as diverse as South Africa or China? In post-apartheid South Africa, kwato is the heaving and thumping soundtrack of a late night Johannesburg. This mutated lo-fi House meets Afro-pop hybrid is the perfect expression of a generation redefining itself. Given that Johannesburg is now renowned as one of the most dangerous cities in the world, the limp-dick phrase 'sound of the ghetto' has some resonance. To date I have seen little foreign attention given to this intriguing musical (and social) phenomenon that is markedly different from the early 80s township jive still holding sway abroad.

Another case in point is China. Given this country's ambivalent state-owned capitalist economy, it was interesting to hear rumblings from within the hutongs (Beijing's elite alleyways and houses). On a recent visit I was intrigued by the existence of nascent underground punk and dance music scenes that operated at a truly subterranean level. For one would truly enjoy reading your commentators' musings and declarations. It may also be the perfect antidote to the all-pervasive emus that is at the pith of the current underground. More letters and longitudes please.

Sean O'Toole Tokyo/China City, Japan

Primer of life

As as subscriber I think it should be brought to the editor's attention that the most useful service *The Wire* can provide for those at the start of their musical journey is a clear indication of where to begin collecting the

essential records within a particular musical genre. It was the recognition of artists such as AMM and Evan Parker in your magazine that reactivated my interest in music. I realise that qualitative judgments and generalisations of style are obstructive in any general description of an album. Yet looking back at some of the reviews featured in recent issues, the descriptions were often unclear. It is useful to know whether a record succeeds in what it sets out to achieve, if it is representative of the artist(s) involved and worth listening to regardless. To ensure the necessary trust required between journalist and audience, proof that the reviewer has not just read the press information is essential. I appreciate the omission of a rating system, but surely when you cover more than one album by an artist there is a need to at least hint towards the better purchase?

That said, you do usually seem to get things right, and the Primer feature is an essential guide to the often intimidating world of modern music. How about ones on the lost movement, the UK improvisation scene or vocal compositions?

Also, a big thank you for David Keenan's excellent — although long overdue — interview with David S Ware (*The Wire* 180). Anyone who attended his majestic performance in London [see On Location page 88] can testify to the comparisons with the classic Coltrane quarter. God forbid I try my hand at reviewing, but I think it is fair to say that Ware's *Go See The World* album is among the finest jazz records in recent years and shows a steady progression with his own strong output. Incidentally, how is Ben Watson's biography on Derek Bailey coming along?

Nick Hendon Shoreham-by-Sea

Stiffen the test

Not since Diamanda Galas cringed her way through a Laurie Anderson track (*The Wire* 153) was an Invisible Jukebox as far reaching and informative as that particular feature can be. Sure, Jim O'Rourke's Jukebox (*The Wire* 180) was great fun. You gotta love his enthusiasm. I was going, 'tuck yeah', right along with him each time he correctly identified a piece. But let's face it, he was asked to identify two artists he'll be releasing on Mokaa, four that he 'adores', and a couple more that he played with in former days. Did you also hand him his own family photo album and challenge him to name the folks within?

I'm not suggesting that he or any other Invisible Jukebox participant be intentionally stumped with hyper-obscure material. But couldn't the test selection be varied a little more? It's obvious that what is displeasing to an artist is going to be as significant in shaping his or her decisions and output as what is admired. Why are so few of your contributors willing to



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'And there's only so much I can do
Taking one day at a time
And deliverance has many faces
But grace is an acquaintance of mine'
From *Dead Bees on a Cake*

explore this side of things? Do they not think it's relevant that a musician might despise *The Beach Boys*? Or can't suffer through a Derek Bailey record? Or would rather eat nails than listen to *Jungle*? Or thinks Beethoven is a bore? If for one would be interested in seeing this aspect of a musician's creative evolution revealed more often.

Oh yeah, and how about another list? It could be the counterpart to the one you presented last year (100 Records That Set The World On Fire While No One Was Listening, issue 175). You could title it 100 Records That Set The World On Fire But Shouldn't Have! It would be a rare chance for us, the readers, to get a more complete picture of your contributors. It would give them the opportunity to present well-accepted records that they themselves find unlistenable. It could be of great interest and would surely double the number of angry rebuttals sent to the Letters page. Please consider it.

Rick Visentin Fukushima City, Japan

Gorgeous discourse

Re: Terri Thieritz (*The Wire* 180), now here is a serene cover of STAR. I just saw the cover and was impressed by his image. The interview made me think about just how important discourse and looks are, and Thieritz's felt like a particularly lucid one. And maybe it's missing the point, but he could do for a pop version of Spice Girl-esque proportions. IN LOVE.

Now that you have upgraded the Primer series to bi-monthly, why not one on The Art Ensemble Of Chicago? Their body of work should be elucidated, as they are one of the greatest bands ever. Shine some light on us.

Evaristo Agudo Barcelona, Spain

Security breach

The timing of your Todd Rundgren Epiphany (*The Wire* 180) is quite uncanny. I very much enjoyed it. The magazine arrived shortly after I'd had a conversation about Todd. Not someone who has crossed my mind in ages.

When I was doing my undergraduate degree at a university in the States, I was a security supervisor for concerts. Once, probably 1979 or 80, I worked on a Todd concert. At that time I would have abandoned my boyfriend for Todd, so security may have been questionable.

Pamela Golden London

Compulsive evidence

Re: Tim Jones's letter concerning Michael Moynihan and the publication *Lords Of Chaos* (*The Wire* 181). Jones refers to an earlier letter on the subject that mentions "various right-wing publications" to illustrate the "unpleasant character" of Michael Moynihan. As editor of *Compulsion*, one of the publications quoted, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that *Compulsion* is

not and has never been a right-wing publication. Just because we have featured Michael Moynihan/Blood Axes why should one assume, as Tim Jones has done, that we share the same beliefs or opinions? After reading the Nick Cave article (*The Wire* 181) I wouldn't be so narrow-minded to think that *The Wire* is a magazine for "misanthropic miserabilists." Although, in saying that, a feature on Death in June would be nice.

Tony Dickie *Compulsion* magazine, Enfield

La Montable behaviour

In response to Kvener Spoo's letter (*The Wire* 180), the question whether La Monte Young should give tapes to Tony Conrad and John Cale has been enlivened for a good number of years with the issue of the attribution of authorship and the implicit threat to Young of unauthorised release.

Conrad made his public outcry against Young's "hoarding" of the archives at the same time as he manoeuvred behind the scenes to prevent the tapes coming under public scrutiny without a Conrad co-composition credit, to which he can scarcely have expected Young to agree.

By itself, moreover, the alleged fact that Young is a big meanie who has prevented Conrad from "hearing his own music" is irrelevant to anyone besides the persons involved, proving nothing about composition or any other larger matter. As for Conrad's "wider criticism" of Young on a political level, I will only point out that in none of Conrad's current projects does he actualise the communal creation he tells us was of the essence of *The Dream Syndicate*, nor does he ever himself abdicate the role of composer.

Conrad has been counting on the legend of the 60s group to "reinforce his 'heroic' reputation" far more than Young, who has other laurels on which to rest — from before, during and after his work with that particular ensemble.

Sandy McCroskey Brooklyn, USA

Boxing Art's ears

Regarding Art Lange's review of John Coltrane's *Classic Quartet: The Complete Impulse Recordings* box set (*The Wire* 179) I don't feel the need to defend John Coltrane's work concerning some of the notorious statements Lange made about his art. The proof is well-documented in numerous publications of musicians' biographies and memoirs that speak of their adulation of his talent, both as leader and sideman, as well as hundreds of recordings of him performing in various contexts that speak for themselves.

To compare studio dates with live performances is ludicrous — jazz music is based on spontaneity and completely circumstantial. ALL musicians play differently when they know that the tape is rolling. The few recorded examples of Monk and Coltrane's collaborative efforts stand out as some of the finest performances in music history.

It's a well-known fact that Coltrane went from Atlantic

to Impulse because he felt that the latter, being a small independent label, would allow him more artistic control. Jazz musicians of his generation always interpreted pop standards and show tunes, that was his background, so that's what he did as well. The beboppers wrote new melodies over standard sets of chord changes, Coltrane wrote new chord changes over standard melodies — what's the difference? Who's to say that it was the record label's decision to determine his repertoire?

Coltrane learned his lessons from Miles Davis in that he treated the recording medium and the gig as separate entities. The bottom line is that he made great records. All fans and students of jazz music are quite aware that the Coltrane quartet's recordings are prerequisite to any effort to understand the mysticism of modern African-American art music.

Jeff Parker via e-mail

Turning turtle

Tony Herrington wrote an editorial about how avant garde music infiltrates the mainstream (*The Wire* 177). I have an example of something even more unpredictable and irrational. The music from one of the stages of the Kid's Station's Playstation game *Panappa The Rapper* (the one about a rapper's cartoon dog) is directly ripped off from the Can track "Turtles Have Short Legs." (from *Canaball 2* on Spoon). Surprised me anyway.

Derek Walmsley via e-mail

Muslimgaize RIP

Learning about the death of Bryn Jones has been a substantial corrective to the positivity felt by my friends during this new year. The vision that Bryn Jones created and discovered through Muslimgaize continues to assert passion and wonder on myself, and many others. His creativity and imagination influenced my discovery of sound as a creative medium, and his stunning acknowledgement that art is a *griot* political serves as a reminder to all artists, regardless of medium. It would be appreciated if perhaps *The Wire* chose to print some kind of retrospective of his work, if only to bring into high relief the unique contribution he has made to the world of art/politics/music/religion.

John Ressler via e-mail

Corrections

Issue 180 in *Autechre's Invisible Jukebox*, the picture of Col had should have been credited to Amy & Tawnee. In the Directory, the distributor for the Trunk label should have been listed as Klang, Gonan House, Midgahole Rd, Heston Bridge H07 7AA, tel/fax 01422 842212. Also in the Directory, the contact information for the Bottom Feeder label was omitted. It is 326 St Johns Place #01, Brooklyn, NY 11238, USA, tel 001 718 622 7607, e-mail forysth@bmspring.com.

Issue 178 in the Directory, the phone/fax number for the Atlanta Krzyku Unc label should have been listed as 00 48 71 372 7892 □

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Daniel Miller's Mini-Meltdown

In recognition of his label's eclectic range of artists, Mute mainman Daniel Miller gets to curate a mini-festival at London's South Bank Centre, in advance of this summer's full Meltdown (which is curated by Mute mainstay Nick Cave). The festival opens with Barry Adamson & Mute A-listers presenting *Music For A Film*, with Pan Sonic, Add N To X, Simon Fisher Turner and Andre Samsonov (RFH, 8 April, 7.30pm). Then Faust, supported by To Rococo Rot, Kneidler and Console, with Gudrun Gut's Ocean Club and Thomas Brinkmann broadcasting from the foyer (QEH, 9, 7.45pm). Riche Hawtin (aka Plastikman), Pan Sonic, Big Bottom and new Mute signings: Appliance conclude the festival with a QEH rooftop concert (10, 10.30pm). Tickets £15/£12/£10, 0171 960 4242. Web: www.sbc.org

Daikan

Brighton arts organisation BNI commissioned this new sound and film installation from composer Thomas Koner and film maker Jurgen Reble. *Daikan* is a soundscape organised around a process of change and transformation. The installation involves ten CD players on random play, going through ten speakers strategically positioned throughout the space to create a dense, complex mesh of sound. Koner's music will be accompanied by Reble's film loops, which are processed through chemical treatments causing them to decay and transform. Brighton Contact Gallery, 16-30 April, Monday 9.30am-5.30pm, Tuesday-Saturday 10am-6pm, 0976 303791, e-mail info@bni1.co.uk. An associated event called Sound Talk, featuring Robin Rimbaud aka

Scanner and SemConductor's Ruth Jarman and Joseph Gerhardt discussing their sound processes, takes place at the same venue, 20 April, 8-10pm

Interference: Turntablism

An examination of the turntable's art forms the core of the latest of these multi-arts events hosted by The Lux Centre and *The Wire*. Live demonstrations and performances showcase the deck's versatility, and there will be a discussion, with audience feedback, of the machine's possibilities for both street level sound and the musical avant garde. Performing and gabbing will be Phil Jeck, Harry Lowe from London DJ crew Scratch Perverts, and tri-phonic turntable experimenter Janek Schaefer. London Lux Centre, 22 April, 8pm, £6/£3, booking: 0171 684 0201, info: 0171 684 2787

Second London Moves

The South Bank's Easter jazz bonanza organised by Joyful Noise. Programme as follows: Jason Rebello meets Tommy Smith (3 April, 3pm), Julian Argüelles Octet, Christine Tobin & Phil Robson (3, 8pm), Mervyn Africa meets Steve Loder (4, 3pm), Jean Toussaint Trio, Atlas featuring John Law, Tim Wells and Brian Abrahams (4, 8pm), Brenda Ratnayak's gospel group (5, 3pm), Nana Tsohe's Drum Circle featuring Ansuman Biswas and Bosco D'Oliveira (5, 8pm). London Purcell Room, prices vary, 0171 960 4242. The festival closes with a gala concert featuring Courtney Pine with Jazz Jamaica, Juliet Roberts, Juvon Ogungbe and African Connection. London QEH, 28 April, 7.45pm, £15/£12/£0

Cheltenham International Jazz Festival

A broad spectrum of music has been lined up for Cheltenham's fourth jazz festival (8-11 April). Highlights include The Herb Alpert (9, 8pm), French pianist Martial Solal, who soundtracked Jean-Luc Godard's *Breathless* (10, 4pm), Chick Corea (10, 7pm), Django Bates (10, 10pm), Dave Douglas, Tiny Tim (10, featuring drummer Jim Black and guitarist Brad Shepik (11, 2pm). Concerts at Cheltenham Town Hall and Everyman Theatre. For info and full programme, tel: 01242 237237, Web: www.cheltenhamfestivals.co.uk/jazz

Giving Voice

An international festival, celebrating all aspects of the human voice, takes place in Aberystwyth and London, with workshops and performances by, among others, Georgian and Russian folk choirs, South African gospel singers, the vocal music of Hildegard of Bingen, ancient songs and chants from India, flamenco and lads from the Iberian Peninsula, and Mongolian overtone singing. Aberystwyth various venues, 1-10 April, times/prices vary. Info: 01970 622133, e-mail: qanw@aber.co.uk. Also at London Union Chapel 9-11 April, info: 0171 226 3750

Songbook Series Exhibition

The Songbook Series invited ten artists and writers to each compile a CD of favourite music, packaged in a full colour booklet containing their work. Participants include Wire contributor Savage Pencil, Robert Crumb, Hunter S Thompson, Ralph Steadman, Gilbert Shelton, Ivor Cutler, Ian Banks and Clive Barker. The series forms the basis of an exhibition at London ICA, 3-4 April, midday-7.30pm, 0171 930 3647, Web: www.songbook-series.co.uk

Spring Festival of New Music

Some 30 new works contrasting "the future of music in Britain" feature in the University of York's spring festival. Pianist Ian Pace will be performing new complexity composer Michael Finnis, in a programme that includes multimedia ensembles MediaPhix and Okeanos, plus New Music Group, Capricorn and more. University of York, 21-30 April, for venue details, times and prices, tel: 01904 432439

Salomé

A multi-roomed dance event featuring electronic soundscapes from improviser and composer Phil Durrant, choreography from Susanne Thomas, and video artists Jane Hodge and Jarne Rory Lucy. London St Pancras Chambers, 29 April-2 May, £10/£7, info: 0171 387 0031

bites

Sachiko M

Sampler amnesia

"I never had any musical education, and I never had any thought of being a musician," remarks Japanese sampler Sachiko M, more as a matter of fact than as an Eno-like non-musician boast. She is the common denominator in a deluge of recent, fascinating releases out of Japan, including a solo sinewave CD and three albums with turntablist Otomo Yoshihide.

Otomo recalls first meeting Sachiko (the M stands for Matsubara) when she was working in the sound effects department of a theatre. Spinning, chopping and editing on a reel-to-reel tape machine, she was whipping up a sandstorm of sounds like a backstage DJ, without any sense that she was making music. Struck by the way her collage techniques resembled his own, Otomo invited her to join his group, Ground Zero. Her role in its tumultuous avant-rock was to trigger samples from a keyboard. "I never improvised with Ground Zero, I was so busy with all the samples," she says. "My job was to keep the samples coming with the right timing." At the group's electrifying final performance at the 1997 LHMC festival in London, the skirling Korean oboe most which dominated much of the hour-long epic *Consume Red* was Sachiko's responsibility.

A year later Sachiko was back in town, bounding around the stage at East London's *Solo* with the new Haco. In an acoustic set that could hardly be further removed from the apocalypse of *Consume Red*, the two women charmed lullabies and pop mantras to the accompaniment of toys and homemade percussion.

Four of the current batch of albums to feature Sachiko are released by the Amoebic label, which she founded in 1997. The most playful is the Hoahio trio with Haco (ex-After Dinner) and koto improviser Michio Yagi (from Koto Vortex). The name Hoahio is an Italian friend's attempt to remember the word 'ohayo', which is Japanese for 'good morning'. Sachiko and Haco bounce lo-tech accidents off each other, and write anthemic pop chants like "Happy Mail" — once heard, often whistled. The whole album has the light, throwaway feel of Japanese avant-garde having fun, uncommitted to any one idiom. "I'd like to keep this going," says Sachiko, "but Haco lives in Kobe, so we don't make music so often. This spring we will play again after an interval of a year, and I think Hoahio will make a new style."

In May, Amoebic will release Steve Beresford's 1978 solo album *The Both Of Surprise*. "The trumpet blast in the batch changes the course of avant-garde history," trumpets the label's catalogue. "Later artists such as Stock, Hausen & Walkman and Otomo Yoshihide were

greatly influenced by this dandy pioneer." Sachiko sees a kindred spirit in Beresford. "Hoahio just play seriously and freely, and I think Beresford does too," she states. "For me this is 'free improvisation'. I don't like free improvisation to be used as the name of a band style." Another Amoebic release, the mostly live *Four Focuses*, features Otomo and the Canadian turntablist Martin Tetreault combining in varied duets with Sachiko's sampler and Yasuhiro Otani's computer.

And now Sachiko has followed up her sold out solo cassette release *Music For Headphone*, with a solo CD, *Sine Wave Solo*. This showcases her austere and minimalist side, an album so stripped down it makes Pan Sonic sound like a skiffle group. Alan to Fred Frith's tabletop investigations into what exactly an electric guitar consists of, in terms of wood and metal, Sachiko examines the precise identity of the sampler once it has had its memory scrubbed clean of all samples. Digital sinewaves pierce, purr, pulse and pan in a fetishistic homage to the machine that dominates end of the century music like no other. The sleeve explains she's playing "100 per

cent free improvisation". No samples, then, that she has little to add. "I wish a music that gazes so intently into the void. "These are my favourite type of sounds," she will say. "I'm always playing with my favourite sounds." Sounds, rather than the instrument, is paramount for Sachiko. On the duo CD, *Un*, released by the Heme label, her empty sampler sings alongside guitarist Toshimaru Nakamura, who uses only feedback from the mixing board.

She still works with Otomo, in the meantime, recorded an album last June for East River's Alcohohol label, inside the Octagonal Room at the new LHMC Sound studio. Sachiko plays a sampler with no samples, Otomo uses a turntable and CD player with no records, and the 'subliminal drummer' Yasuhiro Yoshimitsu certainly doesn't play drums. Fitting up somewhere between percussion and electronics, his kit consisted mainly of a microphone and a bowl of water.

"I think with these musicians, focuses are on hearing the sound, not physically playing musical instruments," Sachiko concludes. "Sometimes the instrument is an obstruction. They just want to listen more to the sound."

CLIVE BELL *Sine Wave Solo*, ISO's *Gravity Clock*, *Hoahio's Happy Mail*, *Four Focuses* (all Amoebic) and *ISO (Alcohohol)* are out now

Rabih Abou-Khalil

Far oud fusion

"The oud is my instrument and I try to cultivate it as much as possible," asserts Rabih Abou-Khalil, "but it has never been really at the centre of my work. I don't do oud records."

In the late 1970s, Abou-Khalil left Beirut and settled in Munich, where he undertook formal training in classical European flute at the city's Academy of Music. Consequently he now regards himself as primarily a composer, though he has played the oud — the Arabic flute — since he was a child. His compositions are characterised by the sinuous melodies and propulsive rhythms of Arabic tradition, but his musical understanding has been filtered through that Western education.

His projects, documented on a series of CDs for Enja, have won him a substantial following in Europe, especially in Germany and France. Recently, his music has also achieved popularity in Lebanon, although the oud customarily accompanies vocal music, and purists view his new departures as "the weirdest thing on earth." To which Abou-Khalil responds, "Tradition is now, and music just doesn't stop, it always continues. The need to express yourself in a language other than words is always something that changes with time stylistically, as much as your emotions change, or your view of the world changes. So I try to do different things from one record to another."

The shaping of his musical orientation began well before he entered the academy. One day he went into a Beirut record shop and bought Thelonicus Monk's *Cross Cross*. "I had no idea who the guy was," he recalls. "The record was cheap, and I thought the name was hip." Other life-altering purchases included Frank Zappa's *Absolutely Free* and Charlie Christian *Live At Minton's*. "Rock, jazz... to me it was the same thing, just something coming from the West."

He has sustained initial enthusiasm for Zappa, coming to admire his resistance to reductive categorisation. "He's not caught in any style, and you can't say Zappa is classical, jazz, rock," he explains. "I think that when this question becomes unimportant, music really starts communicating." It was the communicative imperative driving Monk's music which made the greatest immediate impact. Abou-Khalil recognised the necessity for expression — it had to come out, and those idiosyncratic compositions did the job. In realising his own work he has gravitated towards jazz musicians, "not so much for their jazz phrasing as their ability to communicate with different cultures. Jazz is already a mixture of African culture and Western culture. So the musicians are generally much more flexible."

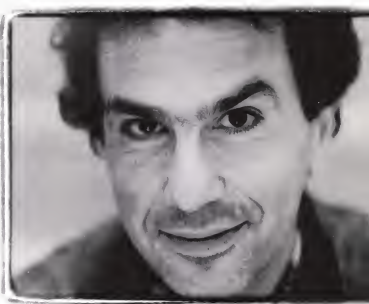
His *Bukra* and *Al-Jalida* albums both feature saxophonist Sonny Fortune, who had previously worked with McCoy Tyner and, in the mid-70s, Miles Davis (on

the latter's apocalyptic pre-retirement records *Agharta* and *Porgy and Bess*). "Every time I heard him, in different settings, I thought he sounded like Sonny Fortune, but sounded very good in the band he played with," says Abou-Khalil. "It would be no use to bring in a soloist who has such a unique voice that nobody would listen to the other people."

For the later CDs, *Blue Camel* and *The Sultan's Ponic*, he brought in musicians of comparable status — albeit Charlie Mariano, bassist Steve Swallow, trumpeter Kenny Wheeler — but the integrity of the ensemble has remained Abou-Khalil's paramount consideration. "I take a lot of care in choosing the musicians I play with."

reflection of that." Bolder inclusions on *The Sultan's Ponic* and *Odd Times* were tuba player Michel Godard and blues-harpist Howard Levy. "Actually, I hate the harmonica," Rabih laughs, "but his performance has such a quality that you forget the instrument. He sounds like a violin at times, and sometimes like a saxophone. This is exactly the thing that always draws me to a musician, when he plays his instrument as if it weren't even there."

His latest release, *Yara*, sets the oud alongside Dominique Filaré's violin, Vincent Courtois's cello and the frame drums of his longest serving collaborator, Nabil Khaat. The music was written and recorded in a



he emphasises. "The whole band is just as strong as its weakest link. This is one of the problems in most of the World Music ventures. They look for instruments and exotica more than they look for musical personalities that can interact."

Such interaction is perhaps the key conception he has drawn from Monk, and from jazz composition more generally. After hearing Wheeler in different contexts, he invited him to join the group. "I liked his flugelhorn sound, the soft and intense approach," he enthuses. "What I really appreciate in musicians is being able to play at the same time sweet with no kitsch, and intellectual without sounding brainy. It's contradictory in itself, but this is what most feelings are anyway. If you have a pure emotion, you're sick. I think art should be a

week to accompany a film by Turkish director Yilmaz Arsan. Abou-Khalil's father died shortly before the recording. He reflects, "I wanted to play just to get some of the emotions out. I wrote tunes which I felt would enforce the emotional content of the film, and built a whole new thing around those themes. I didn't want to write a soundtrack that was just a soundtrack — you put it on a CD and you miss the movie all the time."

He has successfully combined strings with percussion before, on *Arabian Wotz*, invoking The Balanescu Quartet. But characteristically of this musician with an evident taste for paradox, *Yara*, the album that began life as a soundtrack commission, is his most intimate and intense statement to date. **JULIAN COWLEY** *Yara* is out now on Enja

Paul Panhuysen

Birds on a wire

Sound artist Paul Panhuysen works in a variety of disciplines, ranging from sculpture and architecture through to music and performance, with a little ornithology on the side. His long string installations — an ongoing project — are site specific works consisting of steel wires running the entire length of the designated space. As Panhuysen draws his resin-coated fingers along them, he conjures up unearthly soundscapes filled with tremulous, palpitating tones and shimmering timbres. His installations offer an experience akin to being inside the bowels of an enormous stringed instrument: the entire space becomes the work, and the audience is inside it. "Each long string installation enables me to analyse a space," states Panhuysen, "and make features of it visible and audible that one wouldn't normally experience."

Now 65, the Dutchman began making sound art after several years experimenting with sound and music. In 1968, he founded the still active *Macunas Ensemble*, actually a quartet, whose members construct and play their own instruments, such as the musical bow and the tubular aluminum monochords. Operating to a democratic principle, the ensemble insists that no one instrument should predominate over the others. The ensemble's experiments laid the foundations for Panhuysen's solo investigations of the musical potential of novel sound sources. *Engines in Power And Love* constructed its unrelenting trance rhythms from five chattering computer printers subjected to a variety of effects — an apt comment on everyday life in today's information society. His 1992 birdsong CD *Singing The World Into Existence* recorded the responses of a choir of canaries to

one of Panhuysen's long string performances and music tapes.

As well as his own work, Panhuysen ran Het Apollohus, an experimental arts centre in Eindhoven, from its inception in 1980 until cutbacks in subsidies forced it to close 17 years later. His programming reflected his holistic approach to art. "I work with sound, but I have always worked with visual art forms as well," he explains, "so for me it was the most natural thing to create a place where artists regardless of their discipline could present their work." The musicians and composers he booked reads like a who's who of contemporary music: Shelley Hirsch, Rhys Chatham, Arnold Dreyblatt, Phil Niblock, Derek Bailey, Jim O'Rourke, Eugene Chadbourne, Pascal Comelade. As Panhuysen explains, "I set up Het Apollohus so I could present artists whose work I liked. I liked being in touch with them and being able to find out more about their work. It has been the most rewarding thing I ever did." Het Apollohus provided a lifeline for such artists, offering them residences and much-needed exposure. One Apollohus regular, the French musician and

instrument builder Pierre Bastien, once described it as "the centre of our world."

Its closure came as a shock to the musicians and artists who'd come to know it as a second home, but for Panhuysen the consequences weren't entirely negative. "What I enjoy very much now is that I have much more time to spend on my own work," he says. Two new CDs back up his optimism. *Lost For Words* documents his ongoing installation project, *The Galvanos*. Here, Panhuysen feeds extracts from several earlier works through galvanometers to transform their source sounds into the vibrations that cause his wires to resonate. Their ghostly chimes and eerie wafting textures give a faint mirror image of the original input.

The second disc, *Portos For Long Strings*, summarises what he has learned from his sound installations. "With long strings you can get a whole range of harmonics and disharmonics, and in the portos I was trying to build them up and investigate them," he explains. "The first piece is one fat, continuous organ-like sound. But in the second, in which the disharmonics dominate, and in the third, where the harmonics dominate, there are an incredible number of inner melodies and structures."

As ever, his role is a self-effacing one. He does not try to control the strings as a musician might. Instead, he researches what they can do in a given space. Panhuysen doesn't think of himself as a musician. "What it boils down to is trying to achieve a balance between yourself and your surroundings," he writes in the CD's sleeve notes. "You can't achieve this when you are bent on demonstrating virtuosity."

RAMPA KHALLAM *Portos For Long Strings* is released this month on JD Records. *Lost For Words* is out now on *Table Of The Elements*.

PHOTO: PETER H. KOUSS

Rabih Abou-Khalil YARA



ENJ 53902

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VINCENT COURTOIS CELLO
NABIL KHAAT FRAME DRUMS**

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YARA was conceived as the soundtrack to a Turkish-German feature of the same name and the unusual instrumentation with the composers oud featured much more than on previous records, lentown an unusual sound character and haunting emotional depth to the music.

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Kirlian

Sleazy auras

In the typically faceless world of electronics, anyone who cultivates an image as assiduously as Krivan immediately sticks out. Pitching himself somewhere between a pimp and a cabaret artist, this New Yorker has hatched a twisted body of music to match his persona. His latest EP, *Unspurred*, might carry an unusually self-deprecating title, but it's a real Pandora's box, containing offbeat DJ Rush-style Techno ("Fantastic"), a superb pastiche of pocket calculator riffs and cheap drum machine grt and grime ("Dumb Electro Track"), and even a mournful downtempo Latin ballad ("Sista").

"Krikan's style is to be a little more all over the place," says his creator, Techno producer Abe Duque, who took the name from the Russian doctor who photographed the auras of living beings. "The one thing that links it together is the humour. I mean, I don't want to be pegged as some Weird Al Yankovic character, but fun is an important thing to me."

so thick that," he hisses, possibly through gritted teeth

Duque now divides his time between New York and Vienna, where he was immediately welcomed by Mitteleuropa's electronic mavericks. "In Germany and Europe the musical community is a little more linked up," he comments. "It's harder to get in touch with artists in the States, possibly because of the geography."

Kieran brought the two communities together for the "Endorsements" on his 1998 LP *Pleasure Yourself*, in which the likes of Surgeon, Suburban Knight and Frankie Bones confess to "pleasuring themselves" on his answering machine. "It surprised me that everyone agreed to do it," says Dwayne. "Except for Richie Hawn - he sent me a fax. What am I supposed to do with that?"

The album showcased Kieran at his best, sleek and slick, with tracks ranging from the exquisite, syncopated Techno of "Porzellangasse Again" to the booming electro of "Follow" and the rank, cheesy listening of "Ghost Stories," with its truly excruciating, cheap keyboard tones. Unsurprisingly, Dwayne is a fan of cheap home keyboards, his current favourite being a handheld Yamaha M105 tone generator. "I saw Jim Tenor play a few times and laughed at him for the stuff he was using."



Born in Ecuador and now resident in Holland – the same neighbourhood as Run-DMC – Dupré's musical roots are in the New York wave scene of the early 90s, where he cut his teeth playing sessions with production team Program Two, who are best known for their Joey Beltram collaboration "The Omen". He made his mark with a series of crunching Techno releases on his own label Tension, and began his infamous Ranchko Relaxo electronic jamming sessions in the back room of New York's Lemniscate club. "I thought the name was so funny I wanted to do some parties and call them that," he laughs. "It worked out well, people came and hooked up their stuff and we all had some fun."

"That was a golden age," he continues. "Now the parties in New York suck, the people interested in music are outnumbered by the people who want to be fabulous."

The club's spirit lives on through Duque's electronic supergroup The Rancho Relaxo All-Stars, which includes occasional members from both sides of the Atlantic, among them Prototype 909's Taylor Deupree and glamorous Finn Jiri Tenor. Are they The Traveling Wilbuns of experimental electronica? "We'd like people

but lately I've been thinking it's true, you can make some cool stuff with cheesy crappy pieces. I think the concept can make up for a lack of texture."

On the remix front, Dugue is just as unpredictable. Last year he mixed Sean 7's "Beyond Sound" in an abrasive New York Techno style, while a recent reworking of The Meters' "Schwabing Girls" turned into a homage to Moroder's disco. His most talked about work is of DJ Hell's Barry Manilow cover, "Copa," completed with the unlikely assistance of Serotoni Records' John Selway, formerly of proto-gabba outfit Desmorgator. "John has this great voice, he sounds even better than Barry, so we did all the vocals again," Dugue enthuses.





New Yorkers have come to expect such oddities from the man whose DJ sets divide evenly between Techno and salsa. "The first time I did it was at Berlin's Love Parade about three years ago," he recalls. "A lot of people hated it, others thought it was real dumb, but kind of brave. What the hell. It's time for the Wild Style DJ." **MIKE SHALLCROSS** *Kirklin's Unspined EP is out now on Disko B*

bitstream

Donna Somaki releases five- and seven-CD collections from their back catalog this month, the latter a set of live recordings made in Germany and Austria between 1987-90 and featuring Lutz Liebrecht. But both should prepare to be crushed by the imminent arrival of Edmundo's long-promised 50 CD set *Melbor* by Japanese noise totem **Plasma Aikita** — another Fine Art release! **Keiji Haino** has teamed up with Bill Laswell and former Coltrane sideman Eric Ineke to release a new CD, *Live in Tokyo*, for Tzadik with his substitute Russwells group Purple Trip. *** In June, **Seppelt's** Sings! by **David Toop's** *Enigma Fabricated Soundscapes In A Real World*, the follow-up to *Omron Of Sound*, as well as an updated edition of *Rep Attack*. For peripheral listening: cue up David's forthcoming solo album *Museum Of Fear*, created for the Capannella label's Architecture series, and the CDs due to be reissued on his late 70s field recording label Quartz. **Seppelt's** Tail also bring out the UK edition of Erik Davis's *Fetters* in the same month *** **More** *electica* **Jon Hassell's** next release *Acosmologia* features all-acoustic versions of vintage

classics as "Native Boy" with Duke Ellington's "The Blues" and "The Blues Part 2." He also lined up to appear in the new *Worm* Webisodes, *The Million Dollar Hotel* *** **Derek Bailey**'s "versions" album *Playbacks* (which was reviewed back in the *Wire* 177) has finally been released by Sasha Fierce-Jones's Bangla label, despite the belated efforts of contributor Henry Koslos, who tried to sabotage the project by claiming that his track had been tampered with during mastering. It took a letter signed by Bailey himself, stating that "This is exactly how I intended it [no sound], to silence the troublesome/guest/guest *** Now that they have completed their *Soloize* single series **Colt** have produced the first in a subscription-only series of *Clubs* and *Clubs: To Play in the Dark*. They're out now, and they're *Clubs* *** **Pend** *Swamp* jumps *Wine* *Wine* *Clive* *Clive* in *John Woodhouse's* **Pend** *Swamp* group, also scheduled to include *Big Laurel* when they tour Europe later in '99. Meanwhile, if you are in Cornwall for the summer, take eclipse you may find the first series, soundtracked by Schütz, whose *Third Set* CD, based on a male bathhouse in Switzerland, is out in May on the *Rykodisc* label *** The ex-*Television* guitar hero **Tom**

Vertaline is set to release a new album on the Sonic Youth affiliated Smells Like Records which has just issued Lee Hazlewood's chronically late standards album, *Remainder*. *Flower*, *Orange*, *Apple* and *Me* +++ A story cycle turns out for **Robert Wyatt's** *Little Red Red Hood*, a 50 minute full-length (available from BBE) which includes rare footage of early Soft Machine, the complete "Shipbuilding" promo, and interviews with Wyatt, Hugh Hopper, Brian Eno, Phil Manzanares and others +++ No admission price for **Ventil's** **photoFESTIVAL** (22 April–22 May) tickets are free, so the only collateral required is your complete attention to a startling programme that includes Patrick Pabst's *General Magic*, a *Noedel's*/*Fennel's*/*Kutsche's* collaboration, *Disinformation*, *Labradford*, *Reich*, *Hewitt*, *Pino*, *Noto*, *FX*, *Random*, *Monoliese*, *Stech*, *Hausen* & *Wakstein*, *Thomas Brinkmann* and more. www.photofestival.ch +++ Ken Vandermark, Allen Licht, Am O'Rourke, Borbetomagus and more turn out for Canada's *Ministep Summer Bands* (Second **No Music Festival**) in London, Ontario (9–10 April) www.no-musicfestival.com


THE FREAKATORIUM LABORATORIUM...

V/A: Fear No Fall (Lowlands 011)
 Fear No Fall is the improvisation project that took place as part of the Belgien/Gesed Klangtak Festival. Joe O' Reilly (guitar), Denis Pothier (electric bass), Tashiro Kanda (trumpet), Dirk Weidmann (saxophone) and DJ Low (turntable) were involved. This cd is a selection of over 7 hours of recordings that were made of the concerts, with different combinations and solo and group improvisations.

Pierre Bastien: Musiques Parallèles (Lowlands 012)
 For more than twenty years already composer and multi-instrumentalist Bastien is creating a wonderful musical universe full of poetry and imagination. In his fantastic Macintosh-project he constructed his own musical language by thirty small self-made instruments ranging from voice, organ, percussion and non-European instruments like the arking, sans etc. This time Bastien creates a soundcollage that pays tribute to the recordplayer, which he uses as a portable instrument.

Martin Tétreault: Le Nuit ou j'ai del Non (Audioview 003)
 Canadian turntable wizard Martin Tétreault says No. He definitely is one of those DJs that let their fingerprints all over contemporary music. Starting from conceptual visual art, he quickly discovered the possibilities of music and started to experiment with cut-up techniques to create weird interferences. "Le nuit ou j'ai del non" is a terrible open like you have never heard before, using soundscapes coming from recordings of Pierre Henry, Morton Subotnick, Elton Carter and more. Why dig DJ Spooky if you can dig this.

Klangkrieg: Das Fieber der menschlichen Stimme (Audioview 004)
 After 3 years of sound research and studio production Klangkrieg (Felix Kroll and Tim Buhnel) has produced a new stunning work, called "Das Fieber der menschlichen Stimme". This Fever of the Human Voice! featuring 8 compositions made out of processed human voice sounds. The idea refers to an installation work conceived for 8 loudspeakers and cylindrical video projections that has been presented at Dan Arden Opera in Copenhagen during the ArtSonder 99 festival. Most of the tracks make extensive use of human voice sounds, ranging from cut-up system word to completely "atomized" voice bits and digits. In excessive sonic treatment KLANGKRIEG split up words, meanings and information again and again until they lost their recognizable structures. About the dictatorship of precision.



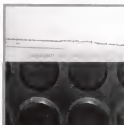
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MUTE



Minneapolis/ St Paul

Electronica prodigy Jake Mandell sits in the spacious basement of his parents' home in suburban Minneapolis playing connect the dots. Created on a pair of Apple Macs, Mandell's music — an off-kilter drum 'n' bass derivation shaped by a rare compositional intelligence — is cooked up from scratch, and he's showing me how he tweaks the series of onscreen Soundtools boxes until he gets the sound he wants. The pattern resembles a DNA strand. So far he's completed some 250 tracks, the best of which appear on his new Worm Interface CD, *Parallel Processes*.

Mandell works in relative isolation, but when he goes out tonight to play the Twilight Lounge of Jitters coffeehouse he'll be among his peers such as experimental DJs Dave Lofquist and Rod Smith. Despite Mandell's self-deprecating claim that "I'd be a DJ," except I have no coordination and no sense of rhythm," his performance proves otherwise. Tweakings pres on a laptop, his shifting beats and elastic melodies, reminiscent of his heroes *Autofire* or *Mouse On Mars*, win the attention of even the most hardened scenesters. For this is physically satisfying music, rather than a grooveless theoretical exercise.

Mandell's experiments are the tip of a surprisingly large iceberg. Minneapolis/St Paul is home to a vibrant underground community, and it's getting bigger all the time. "There are tons of kids who are just getting started," says Rod Smith, who along with Lofquist coordinates the experimental music nights at New Atlantis and the Polar Bear Club. "I get tapes from these brilliant new people, and the surprising thing is how many of them have no interest in playing out." Instead, they're happy to make noise in their bedrooms, distribute the results through the post, and get name-checked on Internet mailing lists.

One example is Jonathan Nelson, aka *Escape Mechanism*, who has recently produced a superb self-titled CD. Heavily influenced by *Negativland* and *The Tape Beatles*, it mixes pop culture artifacts, classic pop sequences and comedic spoken word sections. *Escape Mechanism*, he says, was largely the result of eight months spent in Duluth, three hours north of Minneapolis — several months of which were spent "watching the lake my apartment sat on freeze." Moving back to Minneapolis, Nelson completed the CD, which appropriates often recognizable samples including *The Notorious B.I.G.* and the local boy made good who

A survey of sounds from around the planet. This month . . .

used to be known as Prince (who, in the album's most memorable moment, reassures us that "only children can fall down the bathroom drain"). Yet despite paying the interest of local tastemakers, Nelson has no live plans for his smart, moody beat collages. Then again, a scene centred on solatium belts Minneapolis/St Paul's geographical location. Located smack in the middle of the US continent, the closest major city, Chicago, is eight hours away. Six month winters don't help matters any, either. In the mid-80s, when Prince paced the pop charts and The Replacements and Husker Du did much the same for college radio, more than one onlooker noted that all that time indoors forced the musicians to practise out of sheer boredom. With the arrival of cheap sampling and sequencing equipment, the same circumstances — nothing to do and nowhere to go — feed the next generation of Midwestern sonic explorers.

Of course, not all of them are as reticent to perform as Nelson. Jace Krause willingly wrecks PA speakers with his handy collection of analogue effects boxes, performing under the name *Lost In Translation*. A longtime member of the home-taping noise underground, he began exploring breakbeats while at college in De Kalb, Illinois, where he attended raves thrown by Milwaukee's renegade party crew *Drop Bass Network*. "At first I'd just go into the chill out room because I was into Ambient at the time," he recalls. "I hated Jungle and gabba. I thought it was too fast." The lanky, bespectacled, gregarious Krause grins maniacally. "Now, nothing's fast enough for me."

Indeed it isn't, if his side of the split 12" EP he shares with fellow noisier *Substance P* is any indication. It is released on Krause's own *History Of The Future* label, which has some affinity with breakcore labels like *Vinyl Communications* and *DHR*, as evidenced by *Mechanism's* *Biorhythmic Imperative*, the punishing debut

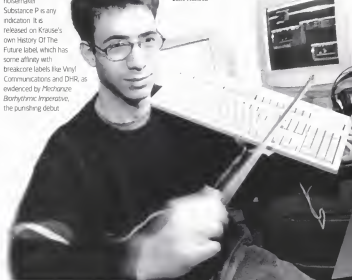
CD from Krause's friend Beng Gross, aka *Radar Threat*. "Everything we've liked over the last ten years finds its way into what we do," Krause explains. "There are a lot of connections between extreme music, and we're trying to bring those out. It doesn't fit any one place. It's too Techno for the noise scene and too noisy for the Techno scene."

The middle ground has always been surprisingly easy to negotiate in the Twin Cities. With its combination of cheap rents, large student population, liberal attitudes and an ingrained DIY attitude borne of necessity, Minneapolis/St Paul is an ideal crucible for the experimentally minded musician. There are drawbacks, of course. Those liberal attitudes are often couched inside the notorious "Minnesota nice", a maddening refusal to be impolite, no matter what. And local radio is increasingly conservative. Even the University of Minnesota's much feted *Radio K* adheres to a fairly rigid playlist whose parameters measure the distance between *Stereolab* and *The Cardigans*.

The live scene, however, is looking up. Though New Atlantis's current home at Jitters coffeehouse is about to be demolished, the number of live outlets for the new underground is increasing daily. In the Twin Cities as everywhere, local rockers are also discovering the joys of beats, bleeps, bass and sheer noise, and several groups now play out with DJs and experimental artists. When relatively obscure musicians like Mandell and Krause can draw crowds of over 300, something is clearly in the air. As Krause puts it, "My theory is that everything good culturally comes out of the Midwest."

MICHAELANGELO MATOS

Jake Mandell



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Grammofon album
Supersilent 4

The frozen fire music of this Oslo quartet is the result of a chance encounter between the electronic stun-gun of former Motorpsycho member Helge Sten, and the three members of premier Norwegian free jazz trio Veslefrikk. Their debut release for Rune Grammofon was a mammoth triple CD of spontaneous blizzard-blowouts recorded in Sten's home studio, and they continue their uncompromising cold fusion experiments on this year's 4, with Helge Sten introducing 'audio viruses' — the Dark Ambient electronics which form the basis of his solo project Deathprod. A typically terse Helge Sten describes "4.1" as "Recorded live on eight tracks at the Audio Virus Lab. No overdubs." *Rune Grammofon, Akasgata 7, 0158 Oslo, Norway. E-mail: rune@grammofon.no. Web: www.runegrammofon.com*



HIGH RISE
"Sadame" from the
Paratactile album *Speed
Free Sonic*

Japanese trio Nango Asahiko (bass/vocals), Nanta Munehiro (guitar) and Ujyd Euro (drums) are one of the more ferocious of Japan's spate of power-rock outfits. Recorded at Tokyo's SB venue in 1994, "Sadame" typifies their blaze of avant noise — a conflagration of rock's hardest burning moments from Blue Cheer and The Stooges to another group which Nango spearheads, the equally extreme Musica Transonic. *Speed Free Sonic* is the first domestic UK release for a High Rise album. *Paratactile* is distributed by Harmonia Mundi.



ROTHKO
"For Danny" from the Lo
Recordings album *A Negative
For French*

A trio of bass players, Mark Beazley, Crawford Blair and Jon Meade give new life to the low end. All their tracks feature combinations of bass tones, from straight FX enhanced drones to a plucked style that recalls the folk picking of John Martyn or John Fahey. Active for several years on the London underground gig circuit, their debut album on Lo Recordings follows their *Windows, Doors And Other Openings* single on Narwhal Records, while a new EP, *Truth Burns*, is slated for a spring release on Foundry. "For Danny", produced by former Cocleau Twin Simon Raymonde, features a loop of Danny Thompson, the folk/jazz bassist whom the group claim as a prime influence. "It's the closest we thought we would come to actually playing with the great man himself," says Mark Beazley. "It feels like he's with us whenever we play it. Danny knows the piece and gave us his blessing to use the sample." *Lo Recordings* is distributed by SRD.



WE
"Helo" from the Asphodel
album *Square Root Of
Negative One*

DJ Olive, Lioop and Once11 form the nucleus of New York outfit We. Veterans of Manhattan's underground party circuit, the trio's debut *As is* came in the wake of interest in so-called 'liberant' music proposed by the likes of DJ Spooky, Wadsworth, Badawi, and other New Yorkers clustered around a community of DJs and event organisers called Soundlab. In the past three years We have toured extensively in the US and Europe, remixed Arto Lindsay and Tapes, while Olive has found himself thrown into more avant garde company playing turntables with free improvisors including William Hooker and Thurston Moore. *Asphodel* is distributed by Pinapple.

THE WIRE



GAS

"Untitled" from the *Plateaux* album *Königsforst*

Wolfgang Voigt has been pumping a distinctive brand of Sharp-lined minimal Techno

from his Cologne homebase since 1993. His prodigious output is released on his own mushrooming family of labels including Studio 1, Profan, Kompakt, Freland, and Krensel, and he operates using an impossible number of aliases, including Mike Ink, Love Inc, M15, Grungerman, Mint and Dom. Voigt describes his vaporous Gas incarnation as part of his ongoing project to "combine typical German music like Schlager and Volksmusik, and classics like Wagner, Schoenberg and Alban Berg, with contemporary music. Gas uses essential classical loops and tries to set them free from their original meaning. The aim is never academic music but to invent something like pop, and to bring the German forest into the disco. Königsforst is a forest near Cologne where I grew up and had my first experiences of how horn and string sounds change their meaning under German oaks on a cold..." *Mike Plateaux is distributed by SRD*



TO ROCOCO ROT

"She Loves Animals" from *The Wire* album *The Amateur View*

With Berlin, home to brothers Robert and Ronald Lippok,

currently under reconstruction. TRR — the Lippoks' collaboration with former Krenzel bassist Stefan Schneider — reflect the city's lighter mood in tiny, self-contained musical mechanisms, understated but full of character. Their first vinyl album appeared on the Cologne independent label Finlayson Tonträger,

which later appeared on CD on Kitty-Yo. In 1997 they signed to City Slang and released *Verculo* and several EPs. They love to collaborate, and have worked with Move D in Heidelberg, as well as Soul Static Sound's D, a track on *The Amateur View* features New York turntablist i-Sound. Recorded in Tobias Levin's studio in Hamburg last year, "She Loves Animals" is described by Stefan Schneider as "an expression reflecting TRR's earthbound perception of the world, concerning themselves about the small and basic things of life." *City Slang is distributed by Vital*



THURSTON MOORE/ EVAN PARKER/ WALTER PRATI

"Children" from *The Material* Sonori album *The Promise*

When Sonic Youth guitarist Thurston Moore joined sax Improv veteran Evan Parker and Italian electronics guru Walter Prati on stage at Canada's 1996 Musique Actuelle Festival, the trio set in motion a work in progress that continued over the ensuing two years and accumulated into the seven tracks on *The Promise*. Parker and Prati have worked together on many occasions in Parker's Electroacoustic Ensemble. According to Thurston, playing with his hero Evan Parker was a humbling experience. "I began doodling with a noodled melody while waiting for the 'tape rolling' announcement," he says. "Evan heard the noodle doodle as sounding like a Coltrane head, and began to blow this melody with interesting results. This left me struggling to work in a suggested melodic vein which is exactly what I did not want to do. But the playing evolved and the tape rolled and it was not very happening, so I feel I fucked things up. But, you know, I'm only 4:1 for Chissake!" *Material Sonori is distributed by Cargo*



MODEL 500

"In And Out" from the *R&S* album *Mind And Body*

Detroit producer and DJ Juan Atkins has assumed many

aliases since founding the pioneering Techno label Metroplex in 1985, releasing records as if from distant points across the universe: Cybotron, Infiniti, Channel One, Output and most famously Model 500. The latter's "Night Drive (Time, Space, Transmat)" was a defining moment for the hothouse electrofunk stewing in Detroit's dance underground. Like his Motor City colleagues, Atkins found more success outside the States, with the majority of his albums released on Euro labels Tresor (88's *Skynet*, an Infiniti production) and R&S (95's *Deep Space*). Recorded at his Metroplex Sound Labs in Detroit, *Mind And Body*, from which "In And Out" is lifted, contains the first new Model 500 material for over five years. Always concerned with "the flow," Atkins told *The Wire* in 1997 "I didn't believe in making records that are a drum machine and some noise that you just tweak a bit this way and that — that doesn't do it for me. The average person now understands the technology behind Techno music, so it comes down to who has the best ideas. It's getting back to emotion: the possibilities are endless." *R&S is distributed by Vital*



PANDIT SHRI KUMAR SHARMA

"Teen Taaf" (extract) from *The Real World* album *Somparskya*

Pandit Shri Kumar Sharma is India's leading exponent of the santoor, a development of the medieval hammered dulcimer. Since *Call Of The Valley*, his famous 1967



* NB: Sincere apologies to overseas news stand readers, but due to unavoidable licensing restrictions, this month's free CD is only available in the UK and to overseas subscribers. For further information, please contact The Wire. UK news stand readers: please tell your newsagent if your free CD is missing from the cover of this issue



collaboration with flautist Hariprasad Chaurasia, he has elevated this once-secondary instrument to the front rank of classical improvisation, he is now well known to international audiences and WOMAD festivalgoers alike. "When we arrived at the Real World studio, near Bath," reflects Sharma of his new release for Peter Gabriel's World Music label, "it was an inspiring feeling to come to such a beautiful place. I was happy to see that within the recordist's booth and the studio where my son Rahul and I were playing, there was a waterfall. In India, for centuries our music has been connected with Nature, ragas are connected with the time cycle. The studio where we were working creates the same ambience." *Real World* is distributed by Virgin/EMI.



KHAN

"Broken English (How Do You Spell...?) from the Matador album 1-900-Get-Khan"

A German expatriate resident in New York, Can Orak is a node in an

electronic net that extends from Berlin and Frankfurt to Manhattan. He forms one half of Global Electronic Network with Liquid Sky boss Dr. Walker (who works with Khan's brother Cem in Acid Techno duo Aer Liquide), as well as running the Temple Records label and store in New York, and releasing solo tracks under various monikers including B Turco Loco, 4E, Cube 4D, Buzz OD and Gizz TV. He has worked with labels as diverse as Mike Paterson, Force Inc., Home Entertainment, Pharna and Caprihorn Productions, but recently signed to Matador. His new album 1-900-Get-Khan is a self-described "imaginary soundtrack through strip bars and sex joints," and features vocal contributions from Julie Cruise. *Matador* is distributed by Vital.



HOOD

"In Iron Light" from the Domino album *The Cycle Of Days And Seasons*

The product of a summer spent

funkered down in a converted Victorian school building in Wetherby, Yorkshire, the debut album by Hood also known to trade as dr'n'l bass outfit Downpour — was assembled via a mixture of tape splicing, sampling and good old fashioned group jamming. Aided and abetted by Third Eye Foundation's Matt Elliott in a production role, the group attempted to emulate the avant-rock constructions of Faust and This Heat. "In Iron Light" was built from a rediscovered violin tape piece, into a tentative experiment in abstract sampling," says a group spokesman. *Domino* is distributed by Vital.



PAUL PANHUYSEN

"Partita For 16 Long Strings Proportionally Tuned" (extract) from the XI Records album *Partitas For Long Strings*

Paul Panhuysen's Apollonius building focused experimental music activity in The Netherlands for many years, although it ceased to operate as a venue late last year. His work centres on installations and site-specific pieces, he has also created music from contact miked dot-matrix printers. *Partitas For Long Strings* documents another strand of his audio research: explorations of harmonics and unconventional tunings in long-string installations from 1982-85. As critic Tom Johnson writes in his sleeve notes: "The two aspects of central interest to Panhuysen were different tunings and density of sound. He played the strings by brushing them, walking back and forth at an even pace. For each *Partita* he recorded his playing four times, superimposing these recordings over each other. It is libertarian, because like John Cage, he lets the music do what it wants to do — in this case the wires vibrate however they need to." *XI Records*, PO Box 1754, Canal Street Station, New York, NY 10013, USA. E-mail: XIRecords@compuserve.com



ROBERT ASHLEY

"Your Money My Life Goodbye" (extract) from the Lovely Music album *Your Money My Life Goodbye*

Born in 1930, American Robert Ashley could be thought of alongside Laurie Anderson, Meredith Monk and Robert Wilson as an artist of the televisual age. In his technological operas and music theatre pieces such as *The Wellman Mortality Review* (1968), *Anytext Lives (Private Parts)* (1977-83) and *Alakanto (Acts Of God)* (1982), he combines electronic signal processing with a unique deadpan, deconstructive approach to the sung and spoken word. He has written a piano sonata on the theme of the discovery of the New World, an opera set in an airport departure lounge, and shorter pieces for TV and video. *Lovely Music* have reassigned his major works on CD, but this excerpt is taken from his newest recording, an opera for radio commissioned by Bayerischer Rundfunk in Munich. The voices heard in the excerpt belong to Sam Ashley, Robert

Ashley and Joan La Barbara. Ashley has finished only seven out of a projected 49 sections of the final work. "It looks like a lifetime of work," he says, "hence the title." *Lovely Music*, 10 Beach Street, New York, NY 10013, USA. E-mail: info@lovely.com. Web: www.lovely.com



SHEILA CHANDRA

"Shehnai Song" from the Real World album *Mooning: A Real World Perspective*

Sheila Chandra burst onto the pop world in 1981 as the singer on Morrison's "Ever So Lonely," a tabla and sitar laden slice of cross-cultural pop. Following a string of LPs on her independent Indipop label, she teamed up with Real World to record a trilogy of albums — *Waving My Ancestors' Voices*, *The Zen Kiss* and *Alone/Crone/Dance* — whose masala of Celtic and Basque folk-song, Indian chant and improvised scating built land bridges between diverse musical continents. "Shehnai Song" is lifted from a retrospective compilation of her music, going back to 1991, and originally appeared on 1994's *The Zen Kiss*. In 1996 she told *The Wire* about the physical effects of her music: "When I hear a drone as it's played, unmagnified, untreated, and I hear all these harmonic dances in it, and then play it five minutes later, I'll hear a different dance. I'll hear South Indian Carnatic vocals, I'll even hear rhythm. There are some things you'll only hear on the twelfth listen, and it's a living experience!" *Real World* is distributed by Virgin/EMI.



VOID

"X-Factor" from the Matador EP *X-Factor*

London based female DJs Blade and Sinn create futuristic beats by manipulating live DAT recordings of assorted industrial sounds. The results are sparse, distorted and otherworldly. *X-Factor* is the first in a series of 12's to be released in 1999, followed by an album later on in the year. *Matador* is distributed by Vital.



RHYS CHATHAM

"Live At Now Nineties" (unreleased track)

Recorded at the Mark Cross in Nottingham during *The Wire's* Adventures in Modern Music night at last November's Now Nineties festival, minimalist composer Rhys, on trumpet, was joined on stage by guitarist Gary Smith and Apache 61 Iaka Meko Shrimai, who acted as DJ and sound trigger for loops and samples provided by an absentee Pat Thomas. *Hard Edge*, Rhys's album of studio-based improvisations and crackling trumpet/electronics again featuring Smith and Thomas, is released this month on the relaunched *Wire Editions* imprint. | *The Wire Editions* is distributed by Harmonia Mundi.

"Some of the most compelling moments in Captain Beelheart's recorded legacy have been heard by just a handful of people." So says Dean Blackwood, co-founder with John Fahey of Revenant Records, on the motivation behind the label's forthcoming five CD collection, *Captain Beelheart: 6 His Magic Band Grow First Ranties (1965-82)*. Comprising acetates, demos, concert recordings and radio

broadcasts, it promises to be the most revealing of an imminent avalanche of Beelheart releases, among them the complete 1967 Buddha recordings on BMG.

Revenant wanted to capture "the unguarded moment", Blackwood explains, for reasons touched upon by former Magic Band guitarist Bill "Zoot Horn Rollo" Harkleroad, who asserted that Beelheart always sang better in casual situations — rehearsals, for instance — than when he actually had to perform in the studio or in concert. Once under the spotlight, some of the tensions that cramped his early performances would resurface.

In going for unguarded moments as opposed to official recordings, Revenant approached the set almost as if it was a field recording project. They called on numerous ex-Magic Band members to help locate the material, and ex-Beelheart drummer John "Drumbo" French interviewed them for the sleeve notes. Whether for reasons of poor health, or because he left music for art 15 years ago, Beelheart has had nothing to do with the collection. For their part, Revenant are unrepentant about going ahead without the Captain's participation, because the set offers intimate glimpses of a musical visionary in the act of creation and of the musicians who took on the Herculean task of realising that vision. "More people need to hear this stuff," enthuses Blackwood. "Picasso's sketchbooks have been published, by God!"

Harkleroad's claim for the revealing unguarded moment is borne out by the set's inclusion of a 1972 promotional radio interview, where a relaxed Beelheart plays a delicious snippet of harmonica, and then proceeds to sing some amazing blues. Even his most obsessive fans will find the a cappella version of John Lee Hooker's "Black Snake" a revelation. He covers his entire range from lycanthropic basso-profundo through tightly controlled hushed tones, climbing up through astonishing meismata to stratospheric falsetto hicups.

As run by Blackwood and Fahey, Revenant is a haven of esoterica where recordings by Derek Bailey and Jim O'Rourke sit alongside mid-century archival material from Dock Boggs and Jenks "Tex" Carman. Grow First fits comfortably somewhere in between.

"It all seems to coalesce around this 'raw music' notion," explains Blackwood, "stuff which has a rawness of spirit, an unadulterated quality to it, a real fundamental oneness too."

Nothing if not onery, the set's hitherto unheard 1965 acetate demos come from original Magic Band guitarist Doug Moon's personal collection. They recall the group's R&B beginnings, playing at dances around its hometown of Lancaster, California, where lust-crazed males would turn up in Chevy low riders, a case of beer in the passenger seat, out to pull. Even in its formative stage, The Magic Band wasn't exactly producing make-out music, and its audiences responded accordingly. Gary Marker, bass guitarist in The Real Gone (the legendary LA group fronted by Gooder and Taj Mahal), remembers the night they stood in for The Magic Band at one Lancaster venue as being all "airborne beer bottles and fistflights popping up every minute or two".

If nothing else, the "grapefruit circuit" helped bring Beelheart out of himself. Indeed, it's hard to reconcile the singer you hear on this early material with the young man who a few years earlier was so chronically shy about recording himself that he would often lose his temper to cover his embarrassment. But once he'd fully committed himself to music — by 1965 he was in his mid-20s — he quickly mapped out the vast dimensions of his voice.

In the beginning Beelheart sang in a higher register, but with practice he managed to bring it down a few notches, by perfecting a style that constricted the voice at the top of the throat, earning him comparisons with Howlin' Wolf. To get that lower, more guttural tone, he used to go out with wet hair to deliberately catch a cold.

Blackwood also sees a connection between Revenant founder John Fahey's self-description as an

the bathroom tapes

'American Primitive' and Beethoven's music: "Fahey was thinking of course of the 'primitive' painters, those who were not classically trained and were somewhat immune to notions of what, by all rights, they 'should' have been doing," he explains. "Just so, Beethoven seems to have had no notion of any incongruity between Howlin' Wolf and Roland Kirk."

This remark is especially pertinent to *Trout Mask Replica*. The album refuses to be demystified no matter how much you know about its creation. Of course, it wasn't written in eight and a half hours — that was a typical piece of Beethoven braggadocio. On the contrary, it was born of insecurity transformed into massive self-belief. Stung by criticism from certain members of the early Magic Band, who claimed he wasn't really a musician because he wasn't conversant with chords and musical structure, Beethoven put together a new, younger group in late 1968 and straight away ruled out all arguments by asserting he would teach them his music. This he largely wrote on the piano. That he couldn't 'play' it in any conventional manner was neither here nor there. Beethoven instructed John French to transcribe the other musicians' parts and then left the group to work out and rehearse his songs' complex rhythm structures and key changes themselves. He compared his spontaneous method of through-composition to "going to the bathroom" after a creative movement he was averse to looking too closely at what he had produced. Using a more polite analogy, Gary Marker, who played bass on a few *Trout Mask* cuts, sardonically remarks: "He was the architect, but he didn't hammer that many nails in."

"We don't pretend Don's not the central figure here," agrees Blackwood, "but the work did not spring fully formed from his forehead, however he might like us to think so. It is the product of many hours and many people. We sought the involvement of as many Magic

Band alumni as possible, and many will be receiving their first payment of any kind in connection with the release of *Beethoven material*."

Apart from

drummer Art Tripp, who was classically trained, the pre-74 Magic Bands came from the blues and rock 'n' roll. They gave the distinct feeling that they were rock. They gave the distinct feeling that they were uncomfortable with Beethoven's through-composition methods. To their ears he didn't really know what he was doing, nor could he do anything the same way twice. True enough, but what's their problem?

Where composers such as Ligeti, Lutoslawski and Cage introduced indeterminate, aleatoric passages to make their work less rigid, Beethoven began working from the opposite end of the spectrum with an intuitive, improvised, semi-aleatoric piano excursion, which he would freeze into a rigid composition. His outpouring of raw material — rather than a controlled improvisation — was then transformed in the transcription and the compositional process into an avant garde musical technique unique to Beethoven. His method parallels the gestural spontaneity of his early oil paintings. On *Grow Fins*, Beethoven's through-composition process is illustrated by the inclusion of both the piano tape for "Evering Bell" and Gary Lucas's reading of it on guitar. "I can play the piano like nobody's business,"

Beethoven defensively asserted in the mid-70s. The piano demo of "Odd Jobs," from the unreleased 1976 album *Box Chari Puller*, certainly shows how he had progressed on the instrument. In a bravura display he switches on the tape recorder and gets the five minute composition down straight off. Beethoven's sax playing was similarly untutored. Admitting he didn't know where the notes were, he preferred to be likened to a whale than to John Coltrane.

The Revenant set's undoubted highlight is the complete version of what has been commonly but erroneously bodged as the *Trout Mask Replica* rehearsals. These particular tapes have their origins in an idea put forward by *Trout Mask* producer Frank Zappa, who wanted to make the album as if it were a field recording at the group's house in the LA suburb of Woodland Hills, with Beethoven recording the vocals later in the studio. The tapes are most remarkable for the illuminating fly-on-the-wall conversations captured on a two-track stereo reel-to-reel machine along with the music. Beethoven ultimately rejected Zappa's idea, accusing him of being a cheapskate. A pity, as these tracks sound much tougher than those eventually recorded at Whitney Studios in Glendale.

In sum, *Grow Fins* is both a "poem to Don's genius" and a strictly legal enterprise, says Blackwood. Even so, does he feel uneasy releasing a compilation that is implicitly disowned by its subject?

"Maybe it's true that we should feel a bit guilty proceeding without Don's involvement," he admits. "I would obviously prefer that he approve of the set. Even if he does not or cannot, I think our overriding directive is to be true to the work and the people who made it." □ *Grow Fins* is released in May by Revenant. A special vinyl edition will be available on Table Of The Elements

Captain Beefheart likened making music to going to the bathroom — it's not something he wants to look back on. Here, Mike Barnes grills the Revenant label on the ethics of its 'unauthorised' CD retrospective that claims its rare unguided moments reveal the true Beefheart



serial deviant

Composer **Luc Ferrari** has bedded down with all the major post-war avant garde movements,

To describe Luc Ferrari merely as a composer of *musique concrète* hardly does him justice. In a career spanning 50 years he has also tried his hand at serialist composition, group improvisation, text scores and game pieces, installations, television and radio documentaries, and Horspiel (radio art). At 70 he shows no signs of standing still: right now he is equipping his new Paris studio, getting to grips with ProTools software, setting up an ambitious on-line cyberbiography, and working on *For West News*, a full-length radiophonic 'travelogue' of a trip he made last year to the USA.

Few other composers could get through so many stylistic evolutions with their reputation intact. Born in Paris in 1929 into a petit bourgeois family of Corsican origin, Luc Ferrari grew up in the bohemian quarter of the Left Bank. The Ferraris were among the first in the neighbourhood to own a radio. The composer fondly recalls discovering "the magical mishmash of scrambled sound, speech and music" that was Radio London during the Second World War. Instinctively drawn to music, he took up the piano, an instrument he has kept faith with through all his generic leaps. No mean pianist, he studied with Alfred Cortot from 1948 to 1950 at the École Normale de Musique de Paris, where he also took composition lessons from Arthur Honegger. The latter's orchestral evocation of a train, *Pacific 231*, had made an enormous impact on the teenage Ferrari when he heard it on the family radio. "Absolutely astounding noise music," he enthuses still, though studying with Honegger proved to be a disappointment. "I found him depressive and pessimistic, saying it wasn't worth it. 'Music's useless, be a dentist instead.' I thought that was odd. I needed something new."

The new was everywhere in Paris at the time. There was the surrealist anger of Pierre Boulez's *Le Solfè Des Éoux* (1948), while Pierre Schaeffer and Pierre Henry created the early *musique concrète* masterpiece *Symphonie Pour Un Homme Seul* (1950) in the newly equipped studios of Radiodiffusion Française. Ferrari attended the city's first *musique concrète* concerts and was invited to work in the studio by Schaeffer himself. "Schaeffer hated contemporary music but he liked me," Ferrari says. "He probably thought I was some kind of deviant in the serial world, that's probably why he invited me. But I didn't go until later, because I wanted to continue writing instrumental music."

From 1953 to 1954 he studied with Olivier Messiaen, whose 1949 innovations in *Mode De Voix* and *Ét D'Incertitudes* helped pave the way for the soon-come total serialism of Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen (who were also Messiaen pupils). Once more, the student was crucial of his teacher. "Messiaen was inspiring when discussing other people's music, and unbearable when he talked about his own," smiles Ferrari. "He kept going on about the birds, and colours, and Lord God, Jesus and Mary, and all that. The concept was to put into music everything he heard and liked. It seemed a little thin to me."

In the mid-1950s Ferrari ended up in the small German town of Darmstadt to attend the famous summer school at the Kranichstein Institute, where Boulez, Stockhausen, Nono, Pousseur, Maderna, Béro and Kagel fought the ideological battles of post-war art music amid the city's bombed out ruins.

"It really disturbed me to see a country like that, demolished to such a degree."



from serialism and musique concrète to radio art and ur-electronica. Words: Dan Warburton

remembers Ferran: "We were coming out of a total mess. Emerging from violence, we wanted something strong, a strong structure. They were ideological times."

Darmstadt's predominant credo was total serialism, the extension of the serial idea, first formalised by Arnold Schoenberg in 1923, to all parameters of music: rhythm, dynamics and timbre, as well as pitch. With typical fury, Boulez became the ardent polemicist of the new music, denouncing Schoenberg as "decadent", declaring his pupil Anton Webern to be "the threshold", and boldly proclaiming that serialism would take music "out of the world of Newton and into the world of Einstein". Though he was caught up in the whirlwind enthusiasm of the times, Ferran quickly found himself on the outside.

"My music at the time was sort of serial, but not too systematic," he says. "Mistakes were accepted! I was more at home with freedom, working on intuition. Boulez seemed to me to be a guy who wrote laws. I quickly moved away from that. When his *Dans le Domaine Musical* started up, I wasn't part of it, and since I leaned more to Schaeffer than to electronic music, people didn't hang out with me all that much."

His relations with Karlheinz Stockhausen were somewhat more cordial. "A great guy," he recalls, "very rich in terms of imagination, all the different aspects of sound creation rolled into one extraordinary intuition — serial, but serial in an explosive way." As a consequence of their friendship Ferran made a groundbreaking documentary about Stockhausen's *Momente* (1966), which he proudly recalls was "the first time contemporary music was broadcast on French television."

The encounter that marked him most at Darmstadt, however, was with the visiting John Cage, precisely because "it had nothing to do with serial music. It was a way of

approaching instruments from a different direction. You had a piano but you didn't use it as a piano — that was already quite close to the concrete way of thinking. Music to provoke something else, moving round the piano, blowing whistles in pans of water, reacting according to some kind of hidden agenda. Cage was totally provocative. We laughed our heads off! Even Boulez laughed. But not for real."

In 1958 Ferran finally took up Schaeffer's offer to go and work in the *Radiodiffusion Française* studio, and produced his first works of *musique concrète*. The two collaborated in setting up the *Groupe de Recherche Musicale (GRM)* in 1959 and quickly fell in with a group of like-minded composers, including Bernard Parmegiani, François-Bernard Mache and François Bayle. Concrete too had quite strict rules. Ferran runs through the drill: "Use sounds as instruments, as sounds on tape, without causality. It was no longer a clarinet or a piano or a piece of metal, but a sound with a form, a development, a life of its own." Schaeffer and Henry were working like samplers; their idea was to capture those sounds which couldn't be serially calibrated because they were too complex in character."

With his GRM colleagues, Ferran travelled teamsters, workshops and factories for materials he could use as sound sources — corrugated iron, metal springs, percussion instruments. But by 1964, in *Hétérozygote*, he was using natural sounds, animal noises, and speech fragments in several languages. That he made no attempt to disguise these fragments' 'causality' is what endeared him to Jim O'Rourke, who commented in *The Wire* 179 "Ferran was the only one that I felt paid any attention to

what the sounds were. To me, when you use a car door slamming, it's not abstract. It's a car door slamming."

As part of a TV production unit — "I was a pseudo sound engineer," he scoffs, "I didn't have any formal training, but I had a feel for it" — Ferran got to travel all over Europe. At the same time he made field recordings for his own use. "I recorded anything that took my fancy, things which probably weren't much use to anyone," he says. These recordings formed the basis of an installation for four tape recorders, called *Musac Promenade* (1969). It invited the public to wander around a gallery space where they were "affronted by the violence that surrounds him/her." A mixed down version released on the Wergo label reveals it to be one of the finest collage pieces of its time, with firework displays, military pageants, cut-up Strauss waltzes, a hilariously out of tune brass band and multilingual dialogue stirred into a joyful sonic stew.

Musac Promenade marked just how far Ferran had moved away from musique concrète. Though he wasn't yet completely "letting sounds be themselves" à la Cage, he was perfectly happy to let sounds be sounds within his compositional architecture.



Ferran on the mix, mid-70s

The logical next step was to remove all traces of "artificial" electronic music altogether. *Presque Rien No. 1: Du Le Lever Du Jour Au Bord De La Mer* (1970) is a "straight" sound portrait of daybreak in the Dalmatian fishing village where the composer was staying.

"I wanted to be as radical as possible, and take it to the limit in terms of using natural sound," Ferran explains. "My bedroom window looked out on a tiny harbour of fishing boats almost surrounded by hills, which gave it an extraordinary acoustic. It was very quiet. At night the silence woke me up — that silence we forget when we live in a city. I heard this silence which, little by little, began to be embellished. It was amazing. I started recording at night, always at the same time when I woke up, about 3 or 4am, and I recorded until about 6am. I had a day of tapes! And then I hit upon an idea. I recorded those sounds which repeated every day: the first fisherman passing by, and so on. Events determined by society."

Ferran's montage is executed with such subtlety that it recalls the Zen story of the master who painted a landscape so perfect he walked into it and disappeared. How did his colleagues at the GRM react? "I remember the session where I played it to them, and their faces turned to stone," he smiles. "They said it wasn't music! I was quite happy, because I thought it wasn't bad at all."

By the time his former Darmstadt colleague Stockhausen had abandoned conventional notation altogether to write "intuitive" texts, Ferran was already working on semi-composed improvisations — as he had been since 1962 with the Ensemble Instrumental de Musique Contemporaine de Paris, the group he co-founded with conductor Konstantin Simonovic. His working methods during this period, incorporating text scores, a willingness to work in any available media with performers

of relatively little formal training, invite comparison with Mauricio Kagel, whose own game pieces would heavily influence John Zorn a decade or so later. The era produced at least two major Ferran pieces, *Intermède* (1967) and *Tautologos 3* (1970), which are about to be reissued by David Grubbs on his new Blue Chopsticks label. They are among the first European works to embrace elements of Minimalism.

"Around 1970 I went to the States and met Steve Reich, Terry Riley, Robert Ashley, Gordon Mumma," he remembers. "I like these guys a lot. I was always interested in repetition — I just didn't know how to tackle it. I was experimenting with loops which repeated in cycles which never met up, musical events where you perceive the idea of repetition without them being necessarily repetitive themselves." On the evidence of *Cellule 75* (1975) and *La Recherche Du Rythme Perdu* (1978), Ferran's Minimalism is less dogmatic and more rhythmically cellular than the Americans.

Recordings made while traveling through Algeria in 1976 yielded four major sound portraits (including *Promenade Symphonique Dans Un Paysage Musical*, released by INA-GRM). His stay in the secluded Pyrenees village of Tuchan led to "another *Presque Rien* being born" in 1977. Added to distant church bells, dog barks, farm noises and the omnipresent whirr of crickets is Ferran's own narrative, which casts him as the hunter in search of sounds. "Putting the walker into the recording process and recognising him as a person led me to make my own instrumental sounds, incorporating a symbolic transcription of what comes into my head and then intervening as composer. I became a kind of director."

In fact Ferran was already more than a kind of director. He had been making films for some years. In the mid-60s he recorded television documentaries on Varese, Messiaen, Hermann Scherchen and Cecil Taylor, as well as that 1966 film on Stockhausen's *Pomorie*. These were followed by several original films between 1967 and 1973. In addition he has composed 17 soundtracks, starting with 1960's *Egypte-Egypte*. In recent times he has been returning with increasing frequency to radio, producing several award-winning *Horspiste* — part tape compositions, part documentaries — commissioned by various European national radio stations.

Independent as ever, he still refuses to subscribe to the pseudo-scientific rhetoric that was the legacy of Boulez-era IRCAM. In 1982 he founded La Muse en Circuit, his own studio/association to advance electroacoustic and radiophonic music. He helped stage several important concerts at the Café de la Danse (a major breakthrough — Paris is woefully short of New Music venues) and released a number of albums before resigning somewhat anonymously as its president in 1994. In typical Ferran fashion he immediately wrote a piece to document "the twists and turns of the affair." His sense of humour has no doubt protected him against ideological assault on numerous occasions, even as it has often led to him being misunderstood. "I use design to evade the serious to such an extent that I've been considered a joker most of the time," Ferran states unapologetically. "But for me humour and dexterity are part and parcel of philosophical work at its most serious."

Very few living composers have mastered humour in music. Boulez and Xenakis, for example, studiously avoid it. But like his close friend Kagel, Ferran's humour recalls the spirit of Haydn, with his ironic (yet never cynical) takes on contemporary stereotypes. The incongruous cut 'n' paste job on *The Blue Danube* in the hilarious *Musac Promenade* anticipates Christian Marclay by 15 years. *Protoplastochi* (1984) rescues popular dance forms for various children's toys, to which he adds a saucy tune. Just the kind of thing to get him banned from America's ultra-PC college campuses.

Fortunately, the Americans haven't cracked his French yet — Ferran is a frequent visitor on the American college circuit. A performance of *Cellule 75* at Mills College led to the work being reissued by John Zorn's Tzadik label. In Chicago, Ferran was introduced to students by David Grubbs. "He knocked everybody dead with his fashion sense," Grubbs remembers. "Bright red Doc Martens, soft, horizontal-brushed woolen suit in bad TV reception grey, coat way too large."

What does Ferran make of the avant rock and electronica inspired by his music? "Samplers are very interesting, a way of doing real-time montage," he avers. "I'm quite fascinated by Techno, and by the way DJs work with records, the ease and directness of the gesture. It's important to have the gesture." *Intermède/Tautologos 3* will be released on *May on Blue Chopsticks*.

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SMIRNOFF



Genesis P-Orridge has spent 30 years burrowing into the belly of the beast, jamming the mechanisms of social control with the music of Throbbing Gristle and Psychic TV. After a lengthy hiatus, his mission continues with the formation of a new group, Thae Majesty. Words: Don Watson. Photography: Fränk Bauer

beyond evil



Within minutes of meeting Genesis P-Orridge, he had dropped his trousers round his ankles and asked photographer Anton Corbijn to capture his recently acquired genital piercing for posterity. Before it dawned on him what was going on, Corbijn was crouching over Genesis's bare crotch, trying to focus through the mists of an almighty hangover on a slightly sleeping cockbot, while Peter 'Sleazy'

Christopherson hovered in the background taking pictures of the pair of them.

This all happened in the past and in another country. 15 years ago in West Berlin's famous squatter house, the Cuckoo, on the eve of Psychic TV's performance at the Atonal festival, which Corbijn and I were covering for *NME*. The incident somehow typified Genesis P-Orridge back then: childlike, even infantile in his lack of barriers, he was self-revealing to the point of embarrassment.

Motivated by a deeply rooted desire to expose and challenge the hidden mechanisms of social control, P-Orridge's exhibitionism raised him to the status of a subcultural guru, a Leary-like figure for a bleaker generation exhorting his followers to turn on, tune in and jam the signals with noise. The downside to his cult status is how negative reaction to his personality has distorted any true critical perspective of his music. From *COLUM* Transmissions through Throbbing Gristle to Psychic TV, his work has unfailingly aroused hostility. Over the years the media flak intensified to such a degree that he ended up seeking asylum in the USA for most of the 90s. It is P-Orridge's curse to be properly understood only in retrospect.

Feeling like "the spaceship that's just docked on an alien planet", Genesis P-Orridge







is back in Britain for the first time since going into US exile to discuss at least three incarnations of himself: Throbbing Gristle, whose back catalogue is currently being reprinted by Mute, the "hypnotic period" Psychic TV, who have reformatted especially to appear alongside Genesis's new group, Three Majesty, featuring longtime PTV associate Larry Thrasher, plus Moroccan master musicians Bachir and Mustafa Attar, in May at London's Royal Festival Hall. When I meet Genesis in the lobby of the Columbia Hotel in London's Baywater, he is genial and reflective, and though he keeps his trousers up throughout, their contents are once again mired in controversy. Internet gossip had claimed that Genesis was about to use an insurance settlement on a fire injury to pay for a sex change operation. I was half expecting to find him in a state of transition between genders.

"That's something I've heard about since I came to England," he responds, slightly bemused. "I wonder where it came from? What's the transitional stage anyway?"

Hormone treatment, I think.

"But then your wily doesn't work," he replies with a grin. His ideas may have changed, but his wicked humour and a transparent fondness for sexual pleasure confirm that there is continuity between the Gen-erations.

For someone who has been through so many transformations, it is hardly surprising when Genesis claims he can't remember the GPO who worked with Throbbing Gristle. "It's like when Salvador Dalí says, 'Dali did this and Dali did that,'" he remarks. "I feel like Gen did all these things, but that isn't me any more."

During TG's five-year lifespan, critical attention rarely got beyond their deliberate flirtation with shock tactics. Their Industrial Records label logo was an Auschwitz building, and the group appropriated Oswald Mosley's "England Awake" lightning flash for its insignia. Meanwhile, the B-side of their first single, "United," was called "Zyklon B Zombie" after the gas used in Hitler's death factories. Much of their first album, *Second Annual Report*, kept up the head-on assault of their live performances. Its inclusion of two tracks about serial killings, "Slag Bait" and "Maggot Death," confirmed most people's impression of TG as sick and disgusting controversialists. Well, it was 1977. Everyone was trying to be as loud and revolting as possible. TG were just a bit more successful at it. Meanwhile, the contemplative side of the group, evident on *After Crose To East*, went unremarked. They resolved this schizophrenia on *DDA* by forging a style of Ambient noise where domesticity, mutilation and emotional trauma flickered past in a strangely seductive dream. 20 Jazz Funk Greats took sublimation and subversion to even greater extremes: the group was pictured on the cover, smiling in catalogue casual clothes, at the famous suicide black spot, Beachy Head, and on the song "Persuasion." Genesis played the part of a man trying to coax his girlfriend into a Readers' Wives home porno scenario, to a backdrop of screams.

The conjunction of opposite signals was a typical TG tactic: the apparently ugly assumes a strange beauty, or a beautiful image conceals something deeply unpleasant. "Or the information you have about an image can completely change your view of it," expands Genesis. "It's like the Industrial Records logo. When people first saw it, they thought it was a factory building, so that was fine, and then it became known that actually it was the ovens at Auschwitz, and suddenly it was this awful, awful thing. But it was still exactly the same picture, and that was a classic example of what we were curious about." The mass media utilised the image much more gratuitously than we ever did, I think. They knew they could destroy people's lives and careers with it, knowing full well that they were deliberately over-emphasising the moral dimension of something that was, in a sense, passive and neutral. It's not the building's fault. And it's not our fault to be aware of the building. We're not culpable because we discovered what happened.

"Nowadays I wouldn't use that imagery," he emphasizes, "but I'm still fascinated by that idea that people will change their moral viewpoint based on an experience they've not had. We didn't anticipate the moral backlash. Our mistake was that the Auschwitz image was too familiar to us; we'd talked about it for months and been

through our initial shock. We often assumed people would 'get it' quicker. I would get quite aggressive because, as far as I was concerned, people were misinterpreting our use of it. But they weren't really; their interpretation was one of the various ways it could be seen. Now I can see that."

He admits to being just as worried by the way TG were perceived as the ultimate Industrial noise group by their devotees.

"Some people were genuinely involved, but they simplified what we thought was the message," Gen recalls. "They would be quite shocked if you reminded them that there were TG love songs and there were funny things and Ambient pieces that were very romantic. They would say, 'Yes, but "Slag Bait," and you'd say, 'Well yes, we did that, but there are also these 40 other songs that are not like that.' It was just this tunnel vision that I personally feel that I miscalculated."

Recorded live in the studio, the melancholy beauty of their fourth album, *Heaven & Earth*, anticipated the sadness of the group's imminent break up. TG split in 1981, with Cosy Fainn Tutti (once Genesis's girlfriend and partner in the pre-TG performance group COUM Transmissions) going out with fellow TG member Chris Carter as Chris & Cosy. Peter "Sleazy" Christopherson stayed on with Genesis to form Psychic TV.

Genesis and Sleazy's PTV partnership lasted long enough to record two fine albums, *Force The Hand Of Chance*, which camouflaged the duo's continuing investigations of the media and social control mechanisms with dreamy pop flirtations, Momcone-like symphonics and apocalyptic disco, and *Dreams Less Sweet*. One of the most musically ambitious albums of the 80s, the latter centred Psychic's jarring noise and ritual musics with composer Andrew Poppy's expansive orchestral and choral parts, interspersed with audio art snapshots in three dimensional sound.

After the relentless reinvention of TG, Psychic TV's early records sound like seduction. They announced that this was a whole new thing, sonically speaking, with "Just Drifting," the opening track of their debut album.

"It was also a confounding of the previous expectations," confirms Genesis. "We did cry with laughter at that one because it was so evidently not Industrial. There is a separation that a lot of people don't realise between the 'us' of conversation and basic daily functioning, and the 'us' of reflection and memory and dreaming of futures. That's something that I'm more and more fascinated with, and it really did begin with that split between TG and PTV."

Again, media attention was diverted from the music by the sado-masochistic ritual videos featured in Psychic TV's live mixed media presentations, which the group launched with a flourish at The Final Academy in 1982. Conceived by Genesis as a celebration of the cut-up and control theories of William S Burroughs and Brian Jones (the Morocco-based artist who turned Burroughs on to cut-ups and introduced Brian Jones to The Master Musicians Of Jaipur), the three day festival brought together these two wise serpents of the Beat Generation and the Industrial children whose work they'd so deeply influenced, in the process sealing a lasting friendship between Burroughs, Gysin and various PTV members.

Unfortunately, Psychic TV's academic credentials failed to impress Britain's moral guardians. The artwork of *Dreams Less Sweet*, centred on an archaic priest with a ripple ring, signalled the group's fascination for totemism, tribal scarification and peering long before they became acceptable high street style accessories. Back then, such body art belonged to an underworld of sexual deviants and criminal subcultures. In its first incarnation, Psychic TV was the propaganda wing of The Temple Of Psychic Youth, which was established to simultaneously investigate and satirise religious subcultures. Hence their emphasis on trance music, Tibetan harpists, body modifications and SM-like approximations of non-Western tribal bonding rituals. Genesis certainly cut a charismatic messianic figure. Perhaps he was getting too good at it, leaving people with the uneasy impression that PTV had become the thing they set out to parody.

After *Dreams Less Sweet*, Sleazy and his partner John Balance left PTV in a hail of recommitments to concentrate on Cot, the electronic project founded by Balance a few years earlier. Under Genesis's guidance, PTV carried on through various mutations, from

“I was very utopian about rave culture. I thought that it was a great chance for each person to build a world that didn't exist before.”



the group that recorded the Brian Jones tribute single "Godstar", to the influential Acid House proselytizers who collaborated with Richard Norris on *Jack The Tab*.

"I was very utopian about [we culture] at first," remembers Genesis. "I thought with the fast editing and the spreading of knowledge of cut-ups, that it was a great chance for each person to build a world that didn't exist before, and it was really open to everyone, rather like we had hoped that Industrialism would be. And then it just became this formalised eulogy to the power of the DJ. The DJ at best is the shaman's drum, not the shaman. It doesn't really matter what their name is, or even if they're there or not. What mattered was the experience that was happening, the disorientation and the delirium, and most of all the unexpected collision."

The British establishment has a long memory. In the late 80s, almost a decade on from the early PTV line-up most closely associated with ritual self-mutilation, Mr Sebastian, their official tattooist, was given a suspended prison sentence for committing "gross and maliciously bodily harm to persons unknown" for administering the piercings in the notorious "Operation Spanner" case brought against a group of consenting sado-masochists.

The furor surrounding Operation Spanner was followed by a hostile TV investigation of Psychic TV activities, which accused them of all manner of Satanic and sexual abuses. Genesis was in the middle of an American tour with PTV in 1991 when the police followed through on the allegations, raided his home and drove off with a veritable load of possibly incriminating material. The TV allegations were later discredited, but the damage was done. "Based on certain comments made by what was then the establishment", he was advised not to return to the UK.

About his "exile", Genesis comments, "I'd been bashed and battered and I felt abandoned. I didn't really get any letters of support apart from Andy Weatherall, which is pretty lame. One DJ gets in touch and says, 'Here's some money, can I help you in any way?' That's it. I feel like I've sacrificed 20 years of sharing my heart with people."

When he arrived in California, however, Genesis linked up with Timothy Leary, whose LSD guru status had also led to long periods on the run from the law. The pair did some shows together, whereby Genesis got to tell his story to Leary's audiences.

"He was so supportive and funny and just said, 'Don't worry, it goes with the job, this sort of shit happens,'" remembers Genesis. "He was so inspiring, too, his mind was always, 'Bang, bang, bang,' always shooting off in new directions. And he was very disciplined. Behind this flamboyant, kaleidoscopic persona, which was real, there was this really arcane, disciplined alchemist, really enjoying the process of studying every last detail of how human beings operated and why, and that was really important, because I hadn't had that since Bron Gysin."

Returning to Britain in an era when the body piercings that once caused moral panic are now a common sight in the high street leaves Genesis with mixed feelings.

"I have to say I'm no longer so sure it's such a good thing to make information so readily available," he questions. "I think sometimes it makes things too easy. People who think they're radical because they have a body piercing have got it the wrong way round. You should be radical and thinking differently because that of itself is a good, healthy thing. And if you then choose to say, 'By the way, I respect your status quo, I am prepared to stand outside by this display', then that's a legitimate extra activity. The signal shouldn't be the mental state, it should be additional to it."

Over the years, a lot of animosity and hostility has flowed between the various ex-TG and PTV factions. Today Genesis is more conciliatory in tone.

"I like what Sielzy does in *Col*, I think Sielzy's an incredibly talented guy, in everything he touches. Chris & Cossey's music doesn't really turn me on from what I've heard of it. But I really admire obsessive and fanatical visions that people adhere to for long enough that it has to be addressed and considered and reappraised, and I think they've done that. They had a very specific vision of what they wanted to be and do and they've done it right through. I always admire that in anyone."

"I think you only feel animosity if your life hasn't moved on in any way, if you're still secretly nostalgic for something. What wasn't fully appreciated about TG was the mutation of equipment. Sielzy and Chris were doing things that still haven't been

assimilated or built upon: Chris and Sleazy would read a lot of those DIY electronics magazines — you know, 'Make Your Own Fuzzbox' — when there weren't many things around and we would just try them out and see what they could do. Sleazy wanted to take cut-up tapes beyond William Burroughs and Brion Gysin, so he latched onto Walkmans the instant they came on the market and built a box to hold six of them, got a small section of a keyboard, and howered it so that when you played one of the keys it played one or other side of the tape. So some of the rhythms were played manually, but with something like 'What A Day' or 'Five Knuckle Shuffle', the rhythm is built up from bits of people talking or street noise, playing keys, chopping it up, and we improved to that, which to this day no one's really doing. And I wonder why not? Why are people just using machines and technology as an over-programmed and over-restrictive toy when you could really strip it to pieces and rebuild it in a structuralist way, so that things happen which otherwise would never be discovered."

The paradox of TG, PTV and their contemporaries, like Public Image, Cabaret Voltaire and Joy Division, is how their records transcend the times they were made in exactly because they tell you so much about them. TG's music is especially evocative of the new landscape emerging back then, science-fiction-like, from the remnants of industrial decay as the brute economic realities of Labour's long dark winter of discontent paved the way for 18 years of Conservative rule. Genesis always stated that they took a journalistic approach to their art. Their songs provide vivid reportage of the psychic damage suffered during Britain's dismantling of the social contract.

"I think we really liberated lyrics," states Gen. "After The Velvet Underground, they had been liberated to some extent, and I think we took it further in terms of what was able to be discussed, the journalistic approach that we took. The Velvet Underground was very New York, I think we opened it up a lot more, far beyond what punk did, a lot of which was just posturing."

"I have always hoped that whoever might be a creative artist in any project, and I'm more and more convinced this is true, has to be a conduit for something other than themselves," he elaborates. "They should never claim ownership of what comes through. They can be proud to have been involved in that process, but I don't think any individual owns it, not if it has some long-term resonance, or divine spark even, which some work does."

"When Brion Gysin used to say 'Poets don't own words', I used to think it was just a pat little permutation. Now I think he meant it literally. Art is something about the weird magic of being alive at one moment, and the weird mystery it is just to be alive. The more you allow the story of what's around you to speak through and with you, the more it works."

He describes his approach to songwriting as being "more like a book written slowly than a series of songs". In time, the songs coalesce into a single, loosely bound work with recurring themes.

"Individual songs are not particularly important to me, it's the gradual unfolding of a life and an observing position. As with any form of creative writing I have become increasingly concerned with taking away confusion, when before I used to play with it. Now I want them to see how I see, not because I want them to agree, but because I feel it's the right time to strip away the artifice and say, 'I'm still really puzzled by this thing of being alive, and for some reason I still feel compelled to tell you that', and maybe if I do that without tricky or noise, I'll see other people thinking, 'Yes, I feel like that too'."

"In the end we're troubadours, you wander around and you tell the stories and you try and record the environment and you're chosen people and you tell their story, not really yours."

with it what thou wilt, in other words. Although he is definitely not undergoing a gender change, the subject of gender fluidity certainly interests him.

"I wrote a piece called 'Breaking Sex' for a magazine about the idea of transsexualism and cosmetic surgery, which I think is important in and of itself, because of the declaration of the malleability of the body. Soon we will have people saying 'I want two noses and four breasts and... big honk!' We've only seen the beginning of the glamorisation of body change. For the first time we have some sort of power to deny the programme of DNA."

He does confess to experimenting with crossdressing while researching that article. "That's how I work," he explains. "I immerse myself in the subject matter." For the Brian Jones song, "Godstar", I had a filing cabinet full of information, just to produce a three-minute pop song. But I like it, it's a colourful rumour and I accept all responsibility for having changed my sex."

Though Genesis was an early proselytiser for rave culture, his ardour gradually wore off as the music descended into repetitive beat tedium. The affair has been over for a while, but he has yet to discover any new music to fill the void. Instead, he found himself drawn back to the eternal music of Morocco's Master Musicians Of Jajouka.

"Last year Bachir Altar started living with us [in New York] and he'd be playing his gumbra and we'd reminisce," he explains. "We started to look at his tradition of music, which is 3000 years old and passed down through the generations, which is so different from Western pop music. You can't say that Mick Jagger plays 'Satisfaction' the same way as his grandfather, and his grandfather before him. In fact, it's not that interesting that Mick Jagger still plays the same song. So what is it in Jajouka's music that is so interesting that it can be played exactly the same for thousands of years and it's always something quite different? It's something to do with what we could call the divine, the not human, the pre-human. Something larger and more abstract and more potent than any of us even take the time to imagine."

"That's what I was hoping was going to be transferred into a rave experience. And sometimes it does happen. When it does it's the same thing, it's a moment of divine intervention, the expression of our aspiration to no longer be stupid, to no longer be human. It's an expression of our aspiration to rematerialise into some other kind of being. Whether we're a bit of it, or all of it, it doesn't matter, but to aspire to the most incredible possibility and have the music express that, and have the words be devotional, within and for that. That made me interested again. I thought, 'Wow, that's a challenge', to be able to incorporate even the tiniest bit of that into something coming from a corrupted Western mind."

"That's where the idea for *Thee Majesty* came from. It was Larry Thrasher who suggested Majesty, because of my relationship with Great Britain at the time. But he's also a SuF, so he also meant it, without irony as being majestic. It was Miss Jackie [Genesis's current partner] who said it should be *Thee Majesty* because it was trying to talk about the majestic, not the earthly version, which is where you get bloodlines saying her majesty or his majesty. So in a sense it's like praying without the prayer. It's not a place I expected to get to and in a way it surprises me that I'm at that place."

Yet the religious element has been a constant in his music, in the form of the repetitions that induce the trance-like dream states where the imagination roams free — a characteristic which Genesis's work shares with most devotional music.

"Brion Gysin used to say he would listen to the second side of *Heaven Earth and Over* while he was using the Dream Machine," Genesis concludes. "That was the only thing he'd listen to, that and Jajouka. Now I can see the clues and I can see that I was clawing myself towards that new illuminated space." □ Genesis P-Orridge appears with *Psychic TV* and *The Majesty* at London's Royal Festival Hall on 1 May. Tel: 0171 960 4242 for details.



There is a single theme common to all Genesis's projects and permutations, it is the issue of control, beginning with the assertion of sovereignty over your own body. Do

invisible jukebox

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they're asked to identify and comment on with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear. This month it's the turn of...

Natacha Atlas

Tested by Peter Shapiro

Natacha Atlas might have been born in the Arabic quarter of Brussels to a Sephardic Jewish/Muslim/Christian family with roots in both Morocco and Egypt, but she spent her teenage years in Northampton. Returning to Brussels after leaving school, she worked as a belly dancer and singer in the city's Arabic and Turkish nightclubs. After coming back to England, in 1989 she appeared on the *RACE* compilations released by Nonesuch Records with a group called Local. Two years later she was singing alongside Sinéad O'Connor on Jah Wobble's *Rising Above Bedlam* album. The following year she was in the charts thanks to her performance on Apache Indian's bhangra-pop hit, "Arranged Marriage". Her most successful collaboration, however, has been with the multi-cultural court jesters, Transglobal Underground. She contributed vocals to their genre-bending *Dream Of NKO Nazim* and *International Times* albums and they returned the favour by producing her debut solo album, 1995's *Dzopson*. After working with David Arnold on the soundtrack to John Carpenter's *Starjammers*, she released her second album, *Holm*, which brought her a significant audience in both France and the Maghreb. While her modern interpretations of Arabic music aren't exactly geared towards commercial success in the UK, she won the ears of Robert Plant and Jimmy Page, when Transglobal Underground toured with the duo in 1998. She has just released her third album, *Gedoka*, for Beggars' Banquet. The Jukebox took place in a rehearsal space in North London.



MONSOON

"Ever So Lonely" from *Monsoon* featuring Shelia Chandra (Mercury)

I recognise that straight away. That's Shelia Chandra. Is that a remix?

It's the album version.

Lovely voice, some nice ideas. A sort of cross-fusion on the Anglo-Indian front which I like.

Her approach seems more deadpan than, say, the things you do with Transglobal Underground.

There's less humour in my [solo] stuff. Transglobal is meant to be a lot lighter. There is one track on Geddo which is quite light-hearted, "Malabeyra", but that sort of reflects that folk-shaabi tradition, wedding music. Wedding music is always a sort of nostalgic which is [admits] breathy, melodramatic tone in Arabic. It's more of a rap in a way. Sayed music, upper Egyptian. 'Yi bnni you a nice bed? bring you a nice bed.' They rap around that sort of thing and it's very humorous. They're like the English. The English love to take the piss and laugh, but at the same time they are very stuck up. It's the same with Egyptians. They love to laugh, but they have a superiority complex about this dimension they've had over the cultural arena. So I probably have that more in my music than Shelia Chandra does because the culture is different. I don't really know too much about her.

FAIRUZ

"Beirut Nah Zaraiat" from *The Legendary Fairuz* (Hemisphere)

It sounds like Fairuz. [Laughs] She did quite a few albums of operettas. This is very much in [that] style. Obviously, it's live. It's a passionate song about Beirut. Fairuz is one of my favourites.

What is it about her style that you like?

They say about her that she has the 'platinum voice of the Middle East'. There's just something in her voice that is like platinum. It's so sheer. The other thing I like about her is her relationship with the Rahbani Brothers and the music they did. Myself and Tim and Hamid from Transglobal are very influenced by the Rahbani Brothers because they have a school of Arabic music, a very definite style. It's got a very 60s/70s feel and it has this really nice cross between classical piano from the 60s sort of European film with the Arabic thing. They really manage to blend the two together really nicely. She did a track which was like Mozart meets Lebanon. It's just a lovely touch. The Rahbani Brothers had this unique way of blending the two things together and coming up with their own unique style, which we are influenced by because it is that West meets Lebanon kind of style.

Fairuz and Om Kalsoum are the two great divas of the Middle East. Why do you think they tower over everybody else?

Om Kalsoum came in right at this period when Egypt was establishing itself as having a cultural domination over the Middle East. She was there at the right time in a way. She started off quite young. She was the

daughter of an Islamic priest, so to speak, so she learned all the scales at an early age. I believe that she probably would have been eaten alive and exploited by her family had she not become quite tough. She had some of the best composers that ever existed writing material for her, and she was famous not just for her own voice, but also because she was representing those composers who were loved by everybody.

Fairuz came just a little later, in another era that was sort of a [cultural] explosion as well. Lebanon was famous for being very avant garde, very in touch with the French, very bronche, because they had a lot of Christians, a lot of Muslims, they're very rich in their cultural things. For a time, Beirut was considered the Paris of the Middle East, while Caro was maybe the New York of the Middle East, except with a lot more sand [laughs]. But Beirut was this shining gem, not so uptight, not so conservative, not so hung up with religious and moral protocol. They were a lot more relaxed and Fairuz in a way represented that. She represented this intercultural relationship with France. And a very different voice to Om Kalsoum. She was very much more feminine, stoical than Om Kalsoum, who had the ability to be quite masculine, especially later in her life. She had a masculine force within her whole presence. Fairuz, on the other hand, was very feminine. If you've seen her live, she hardly moves and she's deadly serious.

Which one is more important to you?

I've probably listened more to Fairuz, but there's a period of Om Kalsoum which I love which is when she had slightly more vulnerability and that came across in her voice. In her early 30s you can kind of hear this innocence, this kind of naivety in her voice along with the wonderful technique. There's a vulnerability there which she doesn't have later on. With Fairuz the vulnerability is always there.

MUSLIMGAUZE

"Bagel Of Poison" from *Observe With Sadig Bey* (Stealplate)

Interesting. I've never heard this before. That's a sample. [Laughs] It sounds like bits of news from Cairo radio broadcasts. And then this sort of pumping bassline. Does it go on like that? Is that it?

Pretty much.

It's probably great in clubs.

Probably. It's Muslimgaize.

Oh right, Muslimgaize. I have heard of him, but I don't know too much about what he does.

He was a musician from Manchester called Bryn Jones who became obsessed with Palestinian radicalism. What do you think of it?

Well, I like it. I know Transglobal have got Muslimgaize in their [DJ] collection. Interspersed with other music that would probably work really well for DJing tricks and stuff. I like it. Somebody's got to do it over here.

As a vision of Arabic culture, do you think it works?

Yeah, but I'd prefer it if he took it a step further because there's no melody going on there. It's almost like the beginning of something and that's it. You see,

I'm at the beginning of working with a guy in Egypt called Maki Sabes, who is half Egyptian, half English, born in Rome. A little bit like me with the three weird things going on. He would use a bassline like this and he would use a shaabi rhythm and he's in the midst of trying to evoke Egyptian music in the same way that I'm trying to do. This reminds me of the bassline that he would use, but it would be interspersed with shaabi melodies, a chorus, there would be much more in there.



PUBLIC IMAGE LIMITED

"The Sult" from *Second Edition* (Virgin)

[Laughs immediately] The first thing I heard there was Wobble's bass playing. There's something in the

delay or how the drums came in or something that made me think, oh, that's Wobble. The actual tune of the bassline I remember as a Wobble refrain. Who's that singing?

That's Johnny Rotten.

Oh, that's Johnny Rotten. This is Public Image. I actually never heard much Public Image. I just remember when Nason said to me, 'Wobble wants to audition you for his band', and they said, 'Public Image'. I was like, 'Oh, [imitates Rotten] Public Image! That's all I know of them except they had something to do with that other mad lot, The Sex Pistols [listens more and laughs]. No matter how much... I have better memories of working with Wobble. I can still hear one of his basslines and then I start laughing. What a crazy band they were, eh? That bassline, after Public Image, he used the same bassline. I'm sure he's been using that same bassline for fucking years [laughs]. They must have had a lot of fun getting drunk together. Very strange combination of notes and things, especially when he starts singing. Cacophonous, isn't it?

I heard an ugly remark that you were involved in the post-punk scene.

It was never involved in that scene. I was at a boarding school for a while, and when I left I went to Northampton because that's where my mother was living. I sort of, by accident, met Bauhaus. Daniel Ash was half Belgian, so we got on quite well as friends. I was in a band for a while, just mucking around, but it was more psychadelic — crap really. It was more Doors-influenced really with the organ sound, which you can also hear in Abdel Halim Hafes's music, in the song "Mawood", which is where I got that influence from. No, I didn't have anything to do with [post-punk]. I did hear my hair orange once for about two months. That was it really. I had a boyfriend who tried to dye my hair bright red, it lasted about half an hour. He said, 'I can't turn you into a Goth. You're a failure at being a Goth, it just doesn't work. You're supposed to wear all black.' Then he tried to dress me up in stuff that was all black, but I had to have something bright blue in there, and he'd go, 'Oh no! I never understood it really, a

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"**W**here is my friend Arto Lindsay?" asks Vinícius Cantuária, peering out into the bordello gloom of a legendary jazz club. Recently disembarked from a New York-London flight, Arto stands, lights a cigarette, shuffles on stage to take a seat in the small gap between Cantuária's guitar and the front row tables. They duet, two exquisite voices melting into serpentine lines of cello and trumpet. Two masters of modern Brazilian music.

I asked Ryuichi Sakamoto his opinion of Cantuária. "He is one of the greatest melody makers of Brazil after Caetano Veloso," he responds. The admiration is reciprocated by Cantuária himself, who waxes even more extravagantly. "People ask me who is the greatest Brazilian music," he says, "and I say, Ryuichi Sakamoto." A New Yorker who grew up in Brazil, then took downtown Manhattan by storm with DNA, one of the oddest groups of the 70s, a Japanese electro-pop pioneer and film composer living in New York, an expatriate Brazilian songwriter currently living in New York, now working with Sean Lennon, Laurie Anderson and a host of other non-Brazilians: the question raised is obvious.

Many years ago, I asked it of Gilberto Gil, one of the founder figures of Brazil's tropicalista movement of the late 60s. What about this dizzying mix that characterises Brazilian music? "This is the quality of Brazilian society," he replied. "From the beginning, Brazil has been a democratic mingling of different races and cultures. The Portuguese, Spanish, French, Dutch at the very beginning of the colonisation, then the Africans, the local Indians, then later in this century, post-war, the American influence. Now the Japanese. We have no tradition in the sense that Europe has. We are 500 years old. We are already designed to be this mess, this new mess. Mess with 'a' and mess with 'e'."

"Gil has a song about it," says Arto, the morning after his impromptu duet at the jazz club. "He calls it general jelly." As our conversation progresses, Arto begins to map the general jelly of Brazil (if a cartography of jelly is possible) onto the general jelly that is globalisation now. If anybody is up to this task it is Arto. Emotional and intellectual,

Arto Lindsay transformed himself from extreme noise guitarist into the again most intimate bossa nova singer-songwriter Vinícius Cantuária, he is redefining bossa nova as a personal soundtrack for

songs for modern lovers





through his archaeology of Brazilian modernism. Now working in tandem with the restless cosmopolitans everywhere. Words: David Toop. Photography: Tim Kent



open to all the arts as well as the sensual world, he is steeped enough in Brazil's popular music history to be able to contextualize all its parts, yet distant enough to understand its meaning for the rest of the world.

His parents were Presbyterian missionaries from the American South, liberals in a conservative religion, running a school in a small town in Brazil. At the age of reason, as he puts it, and to their continuing discomfort, Arto rejected their religion. "Not only does it not feel good, which I knew already," he says, "but it wasn't logical." Later, whatever traces of missionary zeal were left lurking in his character were applied to, as he calls it, John-the-Baptist Brazilian music.

For a nose guitarist who sings tender love songs to the accompaniment of Brazilian rock rhythms and drum 'n' bass beats, the climate has become relatively benign. "Ten years ago," he says, "the kids hated experimentalism. Now it's a damn fad." The same experimentalists kids who are buying Kid Koala, Brigitte Bardot and Beck are crazy about Os Mutantes, the Brazilian trio who disbanded in 1973 after releasing three records of eccentric psychotropicalia. And beyond the boundaries of that peculiar world, other pulses are set racing by Brazil's role at the frontiers of modernism.

As examples of zeitgeist Brazilophilia, Arto cites *Wallpaper* magazine and the German mixed media art expo, *Documenta*, both recently having gone overboard for Brazil. He also includes a forthcoming book, *Tropical Truth*, written by Caetano Veloso, the other important architect of tropicalismo. "I think it's part of this whole moment now where people are beginning to grasp the contribution that Brazil made to the modern whatever," he says. "It's kind of a nostalgia for the modern now. It's an icon."

But in relation to the complexity of Brazil's cultural evolution in the 20th century, this nostalgia is woefully reductionist. Arto and I had begun by talking about bossa nova, if only because the strange and beautiful Jucaim, Vinícius Cantuária's new album for Verve, makes overt links to the bossa nova jazz of Stan Getz, Antonio Carlos Jobim, Laurindo Almeida, João Gilberto, Astrud Gilberto, Charlie Byrd and Luiz Bonfá, released by Verve in the early 60s as a new beat. America had decided that it no longer wished to twist again, like it did last summer, so bossa nova, a rhythm revolution in Brazil, was chosen briefly to soundtrack the cool, aspirant modernism of the period.

Bossa nova's refinement was rejected by Veloso. "He describes," says Arto, who began translating Caetano's book until it became clear that he couldn't devote the necessary time, "that at the beginning of tropicalia he very deliberately didn't write in the style of bossa nova, with the minor chords. When he wrote his manifesto song, the song that launched tropicalia, he imitated The Beatles and used major chords."

What is appealing about bossa nova now, aside from an urban modernist appeal that accords with Alvar Aalto plywood chairs and space age hi-fi, is the recognition that beauty and sophistication can mask deeper levels of cultural significance. Watching a television homage to Tom Jobim's "Girl From Ipanema," I had been struck by a quote from Caetano Veloso. "Sometimes fusions tell us more about deep truths than frankness. It's just beauty that comes to the surface." Arto also likes the comment. "You could take it even further," he responds, "and say that even superficial music is more telling about deep truths, other issues, than good music. The Spice Girls may be more interesting than Kurt Cobain."

Vinícius Cantuária had touched on the musical aspect of this idea when we spoke two weeks earlier. "Jobim is the big one in orchestrations," he said in his slightly fractured but serviceable English. "His piano, each note he plays is like an orchestra."

then breaking off to sing the first notes of "Girl From Ipanema," "very, I don't know if the word is correct, simple, but not only simple because simple is difficult." When I enthuse over Jobim's early 70s *Matta Pelé* album, with its dizzying orchestrations written in the style of Hektor Villa-Lobos, Vinícius sends out waves of awe over the telephone line. "Ah yes, this is beautiful," he says. "Yeah, Villa-Lobos. You know Guerra-Peixe?" Of course, I don't. "Guerra-Peixe is like a cello player. He's doing beautiful melodies and different rhythms. I think he was Jobim's favorite, too. He don't talk to people. He's like a secret but I tell it. He's like a classical composer but he uses European motifs with a lot of Brazilian percussion."

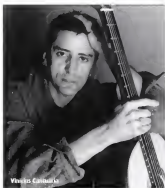
Just as a symphonic composition such as Villa-Lobos's *Órquestra* represented Gilberto Gil's "general jelly" with its juxtaposition of Latin American percussion, folk legends and European orchestra, so the writing of Antonio Carlos Jobim brought together the rich harmony of *Born Of The Cool* jazz, the impressionism of Ravel and Debussy, and a rhythm drawn from the rich source of Brazil's north eastern region.

The currents running below this seemingly placid music — samba ballads, bossa nova, then tropicalismo, the style that emerged during the time of Brazil's military dictatorship — are deep. "A big strain in tropicalismo," says Arto, "was the 20th century classical thing, which has a particular history. A Swiss guy, I believe, a classically trained guy, ended up teaching in Bahia. He invited people like John Cage and David Tudor to Bahia in the late 50s. Not to Rio, not to São Paulo. Tom Ze studied with that guy Caetano heard all that stuff when he was in college." This may help to explain why Tom Ze, once a tropicalista and one of the most eccentric of Brazil's many experimentalists, came to record the little vignettes of minimalist rhythms and noise outbreaks he called "Corona."

The tropicalistas were also influenced by the concrete poets who launched their concept at the São Paulo exhibition of concrete art in 1956. One of the most sublime voices of bossa nova, João Gilberto, was compared with Western "Whining everything down," says Arto. "Less is more, everything by implication. There is the identification of the tropicalistas with the original Brazilian modernists, who had the anthropophagist, cannibalistic metaphor they came up with in 1922 — that Brazilian culture is cannibal. It ingests the European, the Indian and the African and it regurgitates Brazilian culture. These are the guys that came to Europe in the late teens and early 20s. They were artists, writers, some painters. Villa-Lobos himself was involved in that to some extent. They went back to Brazil and did this manifesto, their version of the dadaist-surrealist thing, the cannibalistic metaphor, which I think they stole from Europe anyway. Tropicalistas were influenced by that."

This sense of cultural synthesis, informed by avant garde ideas, has contributed to the incredible diversity of Brazil's pop music, as well as its unique conjunction of sensuality and formal experimentation. The restlessness of an artist such as Milton Nascimento — exploring issues of politics, identity and theology, experimenting with texts and sounds — expresses itself through music that is haunting and seductive, rather than physically alienated.

Although the recent music of Vinícius Cantuária and Arto Lindsay is entwined with the intricate development of Brazilian music, there are departures that connect to their own displacements. Vinícius was born in Manaus, the capital of Amazonas. "My grandmother was born totally inside the rainforest," he says. "My mother, too, in Labrea, a small city just inside the jungle." On his new album, he has recorded a cover of Caetano Veloso's exultant song, "João." His version teems with forest life that, like Richard Maxfield's electronic compositions of the early 60s, penetrates a spirit world



“People are beginning to grasp the contribution Brazil made to the modern whatever. It's kind of a nostalgia for the modern now. It's an icon.”

in the interstices of electronic wiring, aether sounds and the scraping of tiny legs, the hyperspeed flutter of translucent wings. "I call Nana Vasconcelos to play percussion with me," Vinícius says. "I think this contrast between acoustic atmosphere and electronic atmosphere, this is a contrast between Brazil and worlds like England and the United States, civilized worlds."

His albums — the gorgeous *Sol No Cora* released by Rykodisc in 1996, produced with Arto Lindsay and performed by Vinícius with Ryuch Sakamoto, then a recording made with Nana Vasconcelos and released only in Japan, now *Tucumã* — are a late 90s version of bossa nova, enriched by the contributions of musicians as diverse as Sean Lennon, Eric Friedlander, Bill Frisell and Laurie Anderson. I ask him about his feeling about bossa nova and the strangeness of a Brazilian musician creating such a thing now. "You know Everything But The Girl?" he asks. "Yes, of course you know this band. You now have many bands, many people from Japan, from England, from United States, they try to play bossa nova. This bossa nova I really want to do. I don't wanna do old bossa nova. I think bossa nova needs new atmosphere, new oxygen. The old bossa nova is finished, no more. The old style is like lounge music for elevators. No more in Brazil. When I call Sean Lennon I play acoustic guitar, pure bossa nova. He plays bass and it's no more pure bossa nova. It's a mix, a new bossa nova. A new time, you understand?"

One of the absurdities of the discourse surrounding so-called World Music is the continuing insistence on tradition. As Gilberto Gil pointed out, Brazil is the modern culture, the unresolved mix that forms a template of the future for the First World. Europe is the region that carries a vast weight of traditions and now struggles to reconcile those traditions with the rapid changes of the moment. "Brazilian culture feels like it's not yet made," says Arto Lindsay. "That it's still in the process of being made. The whole country feels that way, to some extent. Therefore, it glories into the latest, most modern thing. It feels it doesn't have enough time, it just has to catch on to the newest thing now. 'Hey, we can't be left behind.'"

Like Djavan, another of Brazil's great singer-songwriters, Vinícius grew up in the 60s, playing rock music influenced by big rock, American West Coast harmony groups like Crosby, Stills & Nash and English Prog rock. "Bossa nova is very beautiful," he continues. "Everybody talk to me about Brazil. I'm from Brazil and have a great conversation about the music. I think Brazilian music is the best in the world but not alone, because American music is great. English music is great. Always you talk about The Beatles, you talk about Pink Floyd, you talk about Jeffery Tull, King Crimson, Bob Marley, OK, he came from Jamaica but it came through London. England for me is great music in the planet. But I think because of the language, people don't buy Portuguese songs. If I sing in English my possibilities are big. Brazilian music is too big for too long it's been sleeping. I think now Brazilian music wakes up."

For Arto, the Vinícius story is one of the most heartening things he has seen in a long time. "He came to the States, doing this post-fusion Brazilian pop-rock and he got slammed," he says. "He was writing great songs but when they came to play 'em it was terribly corny, all these bad solos, all these little instrumental unison things stuck everywhere in the song. A nice blah-blah-blee-blee-blee and then the band cluhduhduhduhduhduh, in unison. These horrible things have to come round and be cool at a certain point but not yet."

"He started hanging out with me, we started writing songs. He met Ryuch, Malvin Gibbs, Peter Scherer, Sean Lennon, Zorn, Joey Baron and Bill Frisell. Vinícius is an amazing character. His trajectory — he was a drummer, then a singer-songwriter in Brazil, he moved to Portugal but that didn't work out, then played in this traveling

Wiburns of Brazil which was unbelievably bad. Now he's a guy growing really fast."

The paradox of identity for Vinícius lies within his displacement. "In Brazil I have six albums, very nice success," he says. "In Brazil I'm a composer. I'm a little bit tired. I wanna be more Brazilian but in Brazil it's impossible. Brazil is too big — the music business is too big and then people asking me every day about his, about songs for radio, blah-blah-blah. Of course I can do, I am a musician, but I prefer my acoustic guitar, my percussion, my ideas and then it's difficult you do this in Brazil, because great companies always want to invite you to do a pop album for sales for playing on radio and I'm a little bit upset about this. I wanna be more Brazilian. I wanna be more radical."

"I move to New York. I work more, I wanna develop more my Brazilian style. I think more about Villa-Lobos, I think more about Jobim in New York, no pressure. It's more difficult but it's possible. I moved to New York to be more Brazilian. This is my point. It's strange but it's true. If you're from Japan and you move to Sao Paulo in Brazil, probably you'll be more Japanese. Now I can focus differently to Brazil."



Vinícius with Sean Lennon

For Arto Lindsay, the identity situation is a little more complex. His upbringing, an American child living near Recife on the tip of Brazil's nose, led him to some conclusions that have shaped his subsequent life and work. "One thing I realised early on," he says, "was how relative culture was. I noticed that Americans seemed to think that anything that wasn't American was unnatural in a sense. Same for the Brazilians. I just thought it was completely arbitrary. It depends where you were born."

Convinced that any American college would want to take him because of his interesting background, he quickly learned that abstract essay writing and rich personal history are not visas to enter the establishment. Instead of Yale, he ended up at Florida Presbyterian College in St. Petersburg. He abandoned his studies to go back to Brazil and play music but then the Vietnam War lottery picked out his number. "My number came up 1B," he says. "Up to 100 and you were definitely going to go. I would have had to choose either Canada or Sweden so I went back to school to escape the draft."

In 1974 he moved to New York, fuelled by a host of ideas that were based on reports he had read about the New York art scene. "That was right after 'Television started to play,' he says. "Patti Smith was doing these concerts. When I got to New York these other guys formed this band Mars. I tried a few abortive jams with people like James Chance and Gordon Stevenson, who was the bass player in Teenage Jesus & The Jerks. Television's manager was booking a series at Max's Kansas City, which was still limping along. He couldn't communicate with the guys in Mars and he found it easier to communicate with me so he said, 'You must have a band.'"

In time honoured fashion, Arto confidently agreed to play the following month, then went out to find a group by choosing the most extreme combination of characters he could find. "There was this guy, Robin Crutchfield," he says, "who was a performance artist who I didn't really know but he had this really stunning photograph he'd done of himself. He was fat, he was gay, he had all these dolls taped to himself, he had tits. It was very disturbing."

And then there was Ike Most, now a musician who, in Arto's words, "stands out" in New York's downtown scene. Then, she had no experience of playing the drums and only Arto's records of batucada drums from Brazil to imitate. "People were convinced we were improving," he says, the trio having now named themselves GNA and begun performing in New York's downtown art and music spaces. "We didn't improve a thing," he continues. "We rehearsed these songs like we ground them out. We might start with a nutty idea, like we made a sentence and made a different piece of music

for each word and then rammed it together and made it into a song. Very competitive. We were total snobs. I knew there was somebody out there doing free jazz guitar. One of the first reviews we got was for a series at Artists Space which Brian [Eno] saw, which resulted in [the] *No New York* [compilation]. The guy compared my guitar playing to Fred Frith and Sonny Sharrock. I went out and bought their records."

One extraordinary aspect of Arto's career is his refusal to compromise as a guitar player. On *The Lounge Lizards'* debut album, recorded in 1980, produced by Teo Macero, his unvoiced nose clusters slash across the plastic authenticity of the Lunde brothers, blasting tunes like "Epitaphy" with rhythmically perfect explosions of electric trauma. Three years later, in a trio of himself, Zorn and drummers Anton Fier or Mark Miller on John Zorn's *Locos Solus*, these explosions have been edited down to minimalist interventions. Then this year, on Caetano's *Tucumã*, he dares to shake the exquisite melancholic mood of "Vivo Isolado Do Mundo" with a guitar commentary that is like splintered glass on a beautiful beach.

Once caricatured as the free jazz guitarist, Arto's new role in the world of critical cliché is Arto the Brazilian. In fact, between 1984 and the release of *Envy* by The Ambitious Lovers, the group he formed, post-DNA, with Peter Scherer, up to the present and his trio of albums for Rykodisc — *Noon Chill*, *O Corpo Sul* and *Mundo Civilizado* — he has been growing exponentially, both as a songwriter and singer. From Arto's yelps and yells on *Locos Solus* to the slightly unsure exuberance of "Copy Me" from *The Ambitious Lovers' Greed* in 1988, was not such a huge leap. Move on to the caressing intimacy of "Compliot", "Mundo Civilizado" and "Imbassa", however, all recorded in 1996, and this could be an Arto/Lindsay parallel universe.

"I've been trying to learn how to sing," he says, blurtily. Our conversation wheels back to Caetano Veloso's observation about rusions and deep truth: The other striking aspect of this trio of albums is the way they are structured, their sense of being fragments held together with great authority, their nakedness as composers in a state of becoming, just like Brazilian culture itself. They are mesmerizing and energizing, technical and private. The lyrics are slippery, winding through obscurity, yet completely firm. There is something unbearably poignant yet funny in the way Arto sings Prince's "Erotic City." *"If we cannot make babies, maybe we can make some time... we can fuck until the dawn."*

Later on, I ask him about age and its effect on his work. He talks about Jimmy Scott, Chat Baker, Billie Holiday, Rimbaud, Jimi Hendrix, his relationships with women, pets and his cat, his encroaching baldness, his desire to reach a larger audience, all in the space of a few minutes. "This comes pouring out, the answer to this question," he says. "There's a lot of stuff. I love kids. I do have a cat. When I first moved to New York I would look at these people who were at the age I'm at now, with their pets, and I'd think, this is just sick. They're transferring this love they should give to people to animals. A lot of people say, I get along better with animals than with people. I think, well that's a little Nazi. You should examine that attitude. Now here I am, talking to my cat. Oh, man. This is just part of it. Everybody has to deal with this."

But the compensations for those of us who are not Arto Lindsay are the overwhelming evidence that his ability as a supposedly unskilled musician is pushing popular song as far and as fast as anybody, skilled or otherwise. As a person who doesn't listen to lyrics, I find myself hearing his words and finding elusive meanings in the imagery of personal and political borders and boundaries.

“I’m trying to express a point of view for those who are miscegenated, mulatto in a sense, products of immigration”

"I definitely circle around and around the notion of personal boundaries," he agrees, "in the sense of two people, communication, fucking, love, you know what I mean? Ever since I started writing lyrics I've been interested in that. I think that's what lyrics are about in a song."

"The devices I used since I started — a kiss observed from the point of view of a nose. You mess around with it, mess around with scale. You know, like those Japanese pornographic prints where the genitals are huge. The faces seemed to be very childlike, like they're drinking tea, looking out the window at the sunset while this intense sex is happening."

"I'm trying to express a point of view for those who are miscegenated, mulatto in a sense, products of immigration. Because if you don't feel a connection with a particular thing, if you can't say, 'Oh, this little town on the coast, oh this hilly beach, oh this patch of dirt on the Mississippi, you can understand that relation to, literally, the earth, but you don't have it. Or, you can feel a lot of places. Words obviously can relate directly or indirectly. To understand and develop indirect communication, to

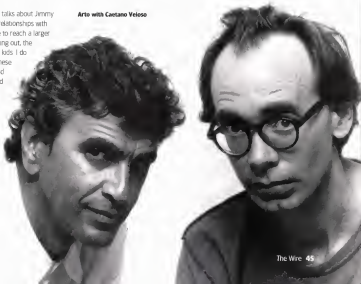
master that and make it clear, that's something I'm consciously trying to do. I like the idea that words in a song can be musical."

I enjoy the fact that his lyrics are so torturous, I tell him. They are stories that lead to images of sensation,

haikus of relationships, a melting of the sexual into language and the general jelly of the world. "Melen [Gibbs] has been encouraging me to be more explicit," he admits, "but I'm not sure I really can be. The emphasis on lyrics and the attempt at writing a lyric that could be simultaneously sophisticated and direct, is a reaction to the Brazilian tradition and an attempt to add to it, to go beyond it, to challenge it back. To find a place for the irrational in that discourse because it's an ultra-rational thing in a sense. Brazilian songwriting doesn't allow for eruptions from the unconscious and I think it would be a healthy thing for it to deal with."

From the unconscious, erupting, and then, as he sings on "Titled" (a song about leaving a mark in the world or choosing to fade back into obscurity), *"disappear like bubbles on a tongue... vanish like breath on a mirror."* Arto Lindsay tours the UK this month under the CFW banner see Out There. His Rykodisc albums are still available. Vinícius Caetano's *Tucumã* is out now on Verve.

Arto with Caetano Veloso





listening aids

Diamonda Galas

How did this century begin? Listening in. A middle-aged bourgeois psychoanalyst in Vienna takes the time to listen, that's all, and it blows our world apart. And how did our world — of songs and CDs, singers and samplers — begin?

With a man in a room, talking to himself about the devil? Maybe. With Alexander Graham Bell's poignant "Come here, Watson, I want you?" Or that carnal Frankenstein wrought in the alchemical crucible of a studio named Sun? Perhaps. Definitely with something plucked out of the air. All in all, with something overhead.

The microphone stands in for the analyst's calm, promiscuous ear: neutral, forgiving, open to everything, the slightest trace or stammer or spoken mark. What we hear plucked out of the air sounds like outposts of innermost feeling — an outpouring of our intangible inner mark. The first field recordings head out to the other side of the tracks, to dirt roads, cheap hotels, juke joints, other islands, other worlds. Culture was hitherto used (pronounce the word both ways) to look for things to hear in concert halls, recitals, the hierarchy of the 12 tone scale like a chesty belt or Victorian stays, pinning the singing, ringing diaphragm inside prior circumscription: a certain predefined operation. Microphones and psychoanalysis — these new phantom sciences — make tremors speak from the invisible inside, where we can neither see nor want the very thing we have always

eludged, and in fact such clear distinctions are rendered dubious by the new grammophone circuitry, by the new grammalogies of analysis and amplification. Recording equipment, like Freud's new science, produces new takes, topologies, topographies. It's no coincidence that one of the first uses for microphone equipment is field recordings: hermetic coils and dials used in the service of an opening distance. What might one day be called a vocal democracy: tongues unbed, arched, allowed. Songs once considered below the belt, beyond the pale, grey room, black night songs. Itinerant blue shamans. Haitian ceremony. Hawaiian unheimlich. The advent of electricity means that such black spots and blue articulations become more than a local event. Such hand-held recordings now sound the way old silent films look: monochrome, brittle, haunted — a new mourning. Listen to early blues recording and you can hear muffled chord changes, the buzz of tired strings, a myriad of local accents (The soft purr of Mississippi John Hurt or the apocalyptic bark of Blind Willie Johnson.) Strangely enough, this "X" factor has survived, lives on reformed, reknotted, in the spooky lo-fi of Will Oldham and Royal Trux, and the tragic last testaments of Kurt Cobain and Jeff Buckley.

Freud's theories and the coming remix of studio music together shatter the founding illusion of our centrifugal "I." The song becomes a viral dissemination: technologised, broadcast, relayed, replayed, addressed to everyone and no one. Recording projects the voice into a nowhere of a future, where it can listen back, say "that's not quite right" (according to what unspoken index?) and correct itself. In its procession, modern recording becomes a science of grafts and sleights. Far from our own spontaneous voice (a mongrel we can't always make do what we wish, make speak what we want), the Song soon becomes a technological paradigm: something which can be turned up, levelled out, far from truthfulness, the microphone can record lies,

the singer first starts to sing into — and more crucially for — the microphone, it was assumed that what was being captured were moments of immortal truth: the record of a performance which would exist whether the microphone had been there or not. But the microphone is like a syringe, which can put in as much as it takes out, filling the singer's head with hallucinatory notions. Outsiders slip through now, because the microphone is a short cut (like the telephone) which repays a more economical delivery, honouring the whisper as much as a holler. The most obvious effect of the microphone is that the usual paradigm of the overarching reach of the voice as signifier of higher truth — as in gospel and opera — could be overturned, allowing the new conversational song of singers like Billie Holiday, Chet Baker, Frank Sinatra (Just as the "Theatre" of the hysterical, under Freud's beneficent care, are replaced by a more truthful murmur.) Later, multi-tracking will allow a "singer" like Brian Wilson — no voice at all in the old way of things — to pull off the assumption of a choral grandeur: his neuroticism? "I" reared, remade, multi-piled.

There is a fascinating document I own: a recording of Billie Holiday in the studio between chats, winking, chattering, just rapping, yes? signifier? (singing the sound of her own voice. She sounds like an angel, a grumpy big cat, a schizo, stoned, drunk, serrated, sardonic, a man, a wind instrument, or here and there something like Linda Blair in *The Exorcist* crossed with Neal Cassidy. And then she says this: "I'm tellin' you — me and my old voice, it just go up a little bit and come down a little bit. It is not LEGIT. I do not got a legitimate voice." Right there she says more than all the bulky Billie boys put together, right there the unconscious speaks, speaks a truth more profound than any analysis to come. There's also another revelatory scene in her (dubious, co-authored) autobiography *Lady Sings The Blues*, when she describes pressing her ear up against the parallel ear of a new gramophone to hear Louis

Undercurrents #4: Continuing our series uncovering the hidden wiring of 20th century music, Ian Penman registers the ghost traces of the Song, after the microphone made phantom presences of the voices of Robert Johnson, Billie Holiday, Brian Wilson, Scott Walker, Diamanda Galas and others

been scared to have revealed. Other voices. Sigmund Freud, the field recording, the nascent pop studio — all perform similar functions. Freud listens for things no one has noted before. Previously, physicians considered only the cast of external symptoms. Freud, in a cautious and carry act of suspended hearing, listens for things between the word, dot-dash series of phonemes, swallowed rhythms, repressions, omissions. Listening out for some other thing, the unconscious, its beady silence or askew telephony. Listening for what speaks in places we don't expect to find. We don't speak, as Lacan will later say it speaks. What is called our interior world finds itself

doubts, concealments, allowing manipulative "takes" of the voice from which a certain tone can be synthesized in the studio console. Thus, the presumed truth of the voice (as in some scene of confession or gospel gloss) cannot be thought of as immutable, as the voice is always now — via recording — at a remove from itself, allowing the singer a certain overview or vantage they never possessed before. Each song becomes a history of the making of song.

The microphone: song is a trace taken out of the air and made monumental. Pre-microphone, the song was a performance with its place in a social continuum — now it is abstracted, sent into the everywhere air. When

Armstrong for the first time. Inaugural revelation, a proverbial dam. "It was the first time I had ever heard anybody sing without using any words, [but] 'Ba-ba-ba-ba-ba-ba' had plenty of meaning for me."

The idea that someone singing a song for their own, an apparently banal song, or a wordless song, can say as much as any 'important' authored song, goes against the tenets of rock critical wisdom. James Baldwin amplifies the meaning of the young Billie's revelation when he writes "It was Bessie Smith, through her tone and cadence, who helped — reconcile me to being a 'nigger' — Zone and cadence, mark you — not any incantatory or explicit lyric."

Lyric's 'authenticity' has been consistently over-valued



Scott Walker circa 1970. Right: Brian Wilson at work

in the dominant (white) discourse, so much so you'd think it was virtually immaterial whether there was a microphone there or not, and a mouth to sing into. Such phallogocentric criticism cannot bring itself to imagine that, say, the 'softest' song in the world might equally bear the harshest truths. The microphonic song insinuates encoded, bodily truths in a code often so subtle (with such infinite gradation of tone) as to be almost inaudible. We rub up against a wider 'political' discourse here, too, in relation to what Flannery O'Connor once called the black person's 'very elaborate manners and great formality, which he uses especially for his own protection and to insure his own privacy'.

We can see here that Song is a 'survival' in at least two or three senses, a living on, an echo of something unsaid (in some cases, something which, if it was said out loud, might get the speaker lynched or jailed.) Billie Holiday's real 'autobiography' was her Song, and this revolutionary fact — that you don't need to pen your own words to make clear all the pain and pleasures, sense and ambivalence of a life — is an incredible thing, which births a properly 'microphonic' singing. When I think about Billie Holiday I think about a masquerade appetite, when I think about her drug habit I think of someone trying to fill themselves with a huge tranche of dispossessed land, all the space they have been denied in 'real' life — the spacy ease of a Sunday walk without constraint, worry or woe, free to drift with the lightest of steps (insert advert voice: 'Only narcotics can do this!') In the Holiday song you hear a Brechtian balancing act (which isn't also painful and preachy on the ear), whose lyrics paint a more or less normative picture but where, if you listen — really listen — to the voice, you know things are otherwise.

It is often said of Holiday and Sinatra that they give us an 'intimate' performance — but intimate for who? With whom? The 'intimacy' of microphonic singing is

also the distanced 'take' of recording and, thereby, transmission and reception at a distance. Intimacy is also the first step toward the promiscuous impersonality of a record buying public, of both the homogenous 'they' of popular reception and the Song's pivotal and ambiguous 'you'.

Even was the impersonality of disc, it was presumed that what you bought was the 'true' voice or persona of the singer. Presumption twice over: the listener's assumption of their 'own' I, and, in turn, the singer's assumed truth-at-a-distance. However, as theorist Frances Dyson puts it, the voice is always already caught up in a prior symbolism. 'Prior to any utterance, it is already caught within particular circuits, switchboards or 'machines' which both literally and figuratively encode, transmit and give meaning to vocal acts.' Which is to say, we always expect specific things of singers — we always expect something more. No one expects a guitar to embody truth: it is a fleeting temporal act (run, nift, solo) rather than an eternal verity. Yet despite the ravages and inroads of modernism, something about the song still primes us



for self-evident truth. The singer's voice, escaping embodiment, paradoxically embodies — and the microphone simply raises this paradox to newbound pitch, a new economy of absence-presence in its neonetic circuitry. Thus with Holiday no one concerns themselves overmuch with what manner of truth resides in the supposedly 'true' lyrics she is given to sing. The spell of truth is presumed to come from her personalised enunciation — voice as re-presented experience — as though the song were itself a body, replete with cuts, tracks and bruises: traces of the lived in fact. Holiday spent half her time in song happily awing. (Other instances of such fatal attraction-confusion are easily found. Kurt Cobain interpreted as apotheosis of a certain generational nihilism when he may have been fatally sincere, almost childlike in his innocent hopes and dreams, heron the only thing which could maintain him in his baby-trail hurt, keeping him endlessly in uero.) The lesson of this is the minute we begin to garland the singer with projective imagery, something singular in the song dies. Unable to deal with the untrammeled mourning peel of the song, we applaud the prophylactic gleam of image, myth, caricature. And in a way, put the singer to death

"To accord hospitality to that which is absolutely foreign or strange, but also, to try to domesticate it, to make it part of the household and have it assume the habits, to make us assume new habits. This is the movement of culture" — Jacques Derrida

And this is precisely what happens. This is the history of our culture. All our favourite voices — stilted, wracked, diabolical, ethereal — brought into our sitting rooms to play. The recording studio and the analyst's room and our own new gramaphonic hearth simultaneously at home and beyond the homely, at once a room and an escape route where we can play hide and seek with our fears. The advent of the stylus/gramophone makes of our home a new spatio-temporal realm where we can shape our own deeply subjective timeframe in track-by-track increments. Where we can repeat the singer's experience, along a full range of Freudian response.

Freudian analysis, microphonics and voodoo have at least this in common: they arrange a spectral meeting (a coming to terms) with our lost voices and lamented others. We sing along with this voice electronic, suddenly inhabited by forgotten ancestors, speak with their voices, repeat their compulsions, do their bidding.

The question of a speculative realignment with dead family — with 'difficult' fathers or assumed mothers, lost brothers, dead twins, absent friends, longed for spouses — resonates all down our days. Hear it in Elvis and Billie, in Brian Wilson and Bob Dylan, and then nearer our own time in Lydia Lunch, Nick Cave, Diamanda Galas, Henry Rollins, Jeff Buckley, Kurt Cobain. Singers who scorn the easy lures of therapy culture, but who come to some account of their own in sound, in song. It is perhaps no coincidence that many of these same people will have problems themselves assuming the settled roles of family and home, of rootedness. As if once they had tasted the nomadic flight of song, the ground seems like a waiting place.

With the advent of full blown multitrack microphonia in the 60s, recordings definitively cease to be 'records' of any single event in space and time. The recorded voice is no longer the sure and certain residue of a 'performance', but the shifting centre of a collage of a thousand micro-performances, spaced out across different times and spaces. Difference made sublime, made hook, made hit. Divorced from any need to perform, the new studio song is a quantum event, the studio is a sounding board, be it for experiments in ego-transcendent sound (Brian Wilson) or ideological articulation (James Brown) or a strange, skewed adumbration of both (Arthur Lee, Hendrix, The Doors).

What would Freud have made of Brian Wilson? The Wilson who was such an unstable mixture of will and illness (but never ill will)? The Brian who can sum up all of Freud's 'Mourning and Melancholia' in one piercing phrase: 'You waiting for the day that you can love again?' Like Freud, this is Brian's life: waiting, and listening. Brian knew (like so much of our century's 'lower class' or marginal geniuses, he knew without the cumbersome apparatus of over-educated knowledge) 'I can hear so

much in your sights. "Brian as radiohonic two-way ear. Per Sounds not one more 'concept' album (in comparison with kitsch peffle like Sgt. Pepper) but as true, moving autobiography. Brian of that sublime moment in "Don't Talk...": when the line "let me hear your heart beat" is sung, softened-stormed-dissolved into "being here with you." Best and being commingled. Brian making a mother's sun of himself in silent opposition to the castrating paternal eye. In his whispered "listen" you can hear a glittering 'son' finally reclaimed, sublimated, sublimed, sent into a glorious bodyless ether/astral life of sound where he can be how he hears. literal sun not literal son, a merman raised by the Enochian tablet of the studio console into a polyphonic congress with mescaline nymphs and stereo sprites and a whole undulant sonic seascape. stoned, immaculate.

Once there is a microphone, no more canons. Anyone can break into this room with a breath, whisper into its waiting ear. Although not everyone can survive an encounter with the forbidding metallic throatiness of this strange passive thief, the microphone goes on, approach it, see how it makes your whole posture change, your throat tremble, your whole being turn in on itself. In the much-told Robert Johnson tale, for instance, no one seems to have noticed that the devil he met was microphone shaped. A microphone, moreover, that he never even sought out, which came to him, and but for which we might never have known his name, his dread, his glory.

After the microphone, no self-contained lineages. Only ghost mixings, unprecedented grafts, insane transitions. From now on, Song will be an aetherial, porous space in which voices lose their demarcation, in which the ordinary is made uncanny, in which the dead speak, in which anyone can speak, or sing, or be surprised. The history of the microphone in this century includes not just blues and pop and G&W and so on, but Richard Nixon, the Reverend Jim Jones and Charles Manson's songbook. And the recordings which seem almost too powerful to listen to are invariably those least tampered with: Artaud in 1947 with his apocalyptic radio "song," "Pour En Finir Avec Le Jugement De Dieu" (itself a call to abandon pious constraint and let the body truly speak); Maya Deren's groundbreaking explorations in *Hart, The Basement Tapes*, Peter Brotzmann's *Machine Gun*. Take your pick, make or take your own lineage. no more canons.

How will this century end? Listening for the final toll. Waiting for the dead to speak.

We may already have heard our definitive eschatological Song — in works such as Scott Walker's nonpareil *Tilt* and Diamanda Galas's *Plague Mass*. Some will doubtless object that such works take the Song too far, onto unrecognizable terrain. But that is just the chance and the dare of our song's survival — and why, too, we must constantly, vigilantly and mercilessly refuse any facile claims of an 'End' or 'Death' of the Song. Beware false prophets who come bearing signs which announce the 'end' of something: it usually marks

little more than the exhaustion of their own resources — intellectual or financial. We need to think about not the end of song but the ends of song. Each singer must find their own end, their own will, their own way. In this way, song might be just beginning to truly speak... in the revivifying breath of a new morning.

It's a work like Walker's *Tilt* is in some part 'unlistenable', as its detractors claim, perhaps that's because our world, too, is now in sum unlistenable. One of the things that *Tilt* seems to suggest is: if we could hear everything in our post-Enslavement, post-Auschwitz world — all the screams in the air, all the irrevocable negations of technology, all the ghosts — just a single moment of it, we would surely go mad from grief.

A switch is thrown and suddenly our 'blues' are global or cosmic, not individual. Such a feeling might destroy, might be too much for one fragile soul to take. We have indeed come a long way from Robert Johnson's moon, or Artaud's scream. Or sometimes, it seems, no way at all (listen to Diamanda Galas's resurrection of blues standards on *The Singer* and elsewhere). This is one of the reasons *Tilt*'s song is literally in ruins: as though a normal song were not strong enough to hold what Walker is pouring into it. For tapping into the business of mourning is no simple affair. What forces must such songs contain? Elemental, transmogrifying, tectonic. And just as the unwary magician can be rent asunder by calling down spirits too big for his talents, so the ill-equipped singer (and I mean this literally: a singer whose only equipment is illness, fragility, sickness) can suffer fatal combustion from going it alone into certain regions, from being our sole channel. Remember, songs are not displaced onto an instrument; they take place as a whorl of alchemy in the singer's body (and ours). At times, it must feel as if the microphone is like some looming S&M master demanding more each time: each take, take it further, make yourself more of an object, more pain, your transcendence awaits.

How will this century end? Haunted, and haunted by its song. I am grateful to Hilton Als for the James Baldwin and Flannery O'Connor queries in his acute article "No Respect" (*The New Yorker*, 2 November 98); and to Frances Brown for the on-line essay "Circles Of The Voice (From Cosmology To Telephony)".

Billie Holiday





Delve into the past lives of **Rhys Chatham**, and you'll find his image popping up at many of music's historical moments. Rob Young meets a Minimalist pioneer who is reinventing himself at the hard edge of breakbeat-driven electric jazz. Photography: Justin Wastover



zelig complex

Back in the middle part of this century, Charles Jayne, astrology columnist on New York's *Daily News*, predicted the discovery in 1975 of a new planet near its own node with an orbital period of 50 years. As Jayne's nephew Rhys Chatham affirms "Chiron was found within four degrees of its south-node, only two years later than the predicted discovery time and its orbital period was indeed 50 years." Close enough for a cigar, they, and to judge by the eventful orbit that Chatham has followed through the musical starbursts of the post-war universe, Jayne wasn't the only member of the family with the gift for chasing down significant conjunctions.

"We're at the end of the 90s," says Rhys Chatham. "I believe it's a good time for bringing up everything we've learned in this century as much as possible. So I remain completely in favour of positive musical confusion, and I'm a firm advocate of musical cross-dressing."

Chatham, who left his native New York for Paris in 1988, certainly confused a fair number of followers when, without warning, he donned tools on the steel girded constructions of the guitar orchestra pieces for which he was best known, proclaimed his passion for "rap, House, Detroit, Techno, Jungle, drum 'n' bass and Techstep", and reinvented himself as a wild man of the electric trumpet. The results of this transformation were first heard on the 1995 single "Neon," released by the Ninja Tune label's Ntone subsidiary. A new album, *Hard Edge*, released this month by The Wee's relaunched Wire Editions label, expands on an approach that amplifies the acoustic trumpet into a millennial echo of Pete Seeger's distorted guitar technique.

Like a more active version of Woody Allen's Zelig character, the more you delve into Rhys Chatham's past lives, the more you find his silhouette cropping up at many of history's significant crossings, shadowing music's evolutionary tremors.

Born in Manhattan in 1952, he was immersed from an early age (via the influence of his harpsichordist father) in a baroque environment of Boehm flutes and the Jacobean virginal madrigals of Giles Farnaby and John Bull. A strange temporal twist of fate pulled him into the 20th century when he got a job as a harpsichord and piano tuner, attending to instruments belonging to Gustav Leonhardt, Glenn Gould and La Monte Young, who paid off the young Chatham in piano lessons. "During this period [early 70s] I sang in his

group, The Theatre Of Eternal Music," he recalls, "Jon Hassell was on trumpet and Garrett List on trombone. Terry Riley would drop in to sing when he was in town."

This sounds like a pivotal moment, but prior to joining Young's group, Rhys had already come into contact with New York's hardcore Minimalist community in the early 70s he played in a trio with Charlemagne Palestine and violinist Tony Conrad, who, of course, had been a member of the original mid-60s Theatre Of Eternal Music alongside Young, his partner Marian Zazeela and John Cale. "One concert we did lasted ten hours," Rhys recalls. "Charlemagne was singing in his Balinese style. Tony played violin and I played harmonium and transverse flute. It was heady stuff and had a profound influence on my later work. It was through my work with them that I broke out of the idea of a composer as a kind of dictator who tells musicians what to do and bosses them around. Along with Terry Riley, it was Charlemagne, Tony and La Monte who turned me on to the idea of being a composer/performer in a real-time context, working with a group of musicians to arrive at ideas rather than sitting alone in a room at one's desk with pencil, eraser and manuscript paper."

Around this time he began studying tuning and composition at New York University, where he fell in with the American electronic avant garde: Morton Subotnick, Maryanne Amacher, Serge Tcherepnin, Ingram Marshall and Elaine Radigue, he also briefly studied Eastern musical techniques with drone guru Pandit Pran Nath, whose drupad vocal stylings had exerted such a profound influence on both La Monte Young and Jon Hassell.

His musical progress continued to take him among some of the brightest stars in the New York firmament. At CBGB's in 1975 he saw one of The Ramones' earliest performances, which prompted a Minimalist epiphany of a different sort. "I thought, those guys are playing only three chords! That might have been one or two chords more than I was using in my music at the time, but I could see the similarities. So I borrowed a friend's Telecaster, learned how to play bar chords and solo a bit and joined a band."

That group was an early No Wave/hardcore trio featuring Nina Canal (later of U2) and bassist Robert Appleton. Soon, Chatham had jumped sideways into the better known Arsenal, and what had been a fairly disparate collection of musicians and artists began to coalesce around strong, emerging figures such as Patti Smith and Tom Verlaine.

"I knew Pat as a poet on the St Mark's poetry scene in the East Village, before I ever knew her as a rock musician," Rhys explains. "When she started playing at CBGBs it was encouraging to a lot of us. I was living at the time on East 12th Street — it was in Allen Ginsberg's building. There were these strange guys I'd say hello to in the hallway all dressed in black and wearing shades. They turned out to be in Television."

Rhys describes these "rock years" in the late '70s and early '80s as "field research." Previously, in 1971, he had founded the influential experimental music programme at New York's Kitchen, which he continued to run as music director for most of the ensuing decade. His interest in linking classical New Music with the city's rock avant-garde laid the foundations for the circles he was to move in during the '80s: the "downbeat" crowd of clubbed-up, urbane improvisors that included Elliott Sharp, Arto Lindsay, John Zorn, Peter Gordon, Scott Johnson and Glenn Branca. "After working as a rock musician in various groups for about a year, I felt I was ready to incorporate everything I was as a musician in a rock context, including my experience as a composer and piano tuner," he says. The result was *Guitar Trio*, composed in early 1977. "It was for three electric guitars in special tunings, whose vocabulary consisted entirely of the overtones being generated by playing one chord on the guitar. It was the first piece I made which I felt broke past my teachers and really reflected my individuality as a musician and composer."

Rhys has become something of a chronicler of those times in New York before transgressive experimentation crystallised into genres with more fixed (and therefore marketable) parameters: Grunge, Steve Allen-styled math rock, Knitting Factory jazz. He still hankers after the peculiar mutability of the city's musical community back then. "A special set of circumstances had converged on the rock and art music scenes in New York which allowed musicians from what then seemed like mutually exclusive contexts, to mingle and merge in a way that hadn't really been possible before or since. People who were basically coming out of the rock scene, like Robert Fripp, were playing in places like the Kitchen, people coming out of a classical context were playing in rock clubs, jazz musicians like Oliver Lake and The Art Ensemble Of Chicago were playing in what before were considered bastions of classical music. There was a feeling back then of transgression and almost palpable danger present when these musicians crossed contexts. It ruffled feathers."

In the early '80s, with a number of compositions for varying sized ensembles of electric guitars and other amplified instruments behind him, Rhys discovered that he was going dead due to the extreme volumes he'd deliberately subjected himself to. After fitting with smaller ensemble pieces, including compositions for brass, he wrote *The Donnegorther* (1984-86) and the 100 guitar composition *An Angel Moves Too Fast To See* (a full version of which is due to be re-released by Table Of Elements later this year). To perform *An Angel Moves* properly, Rhys usually advertises in advance for guitarists of all persuasions in the respective towns to present themselves for rehearsal. The result can be like hearing Television in full flight, multiplied fiftyfold. Unlike the distortion-based guitar orchestras of his contemporary Glenn Branca, *An Angel Moves* factors in a degree of rhythmic agility (his longtime collaborator on drums is ex-Sleaze percussionist Jonathan Kane). By 1993 he had accomplished three "evening-length" works for the 100 guitar orchestra.

In 1982, however, when he composed the short piece *For Brass*, Rhys had started to become interested in the trumpet, and had determined to penetrate the mysteries of its valves. He took lessons from Robert Pichereau, a bebop-era French trumpeter, who taught him "a way of playing that was used by a lot of players before the war. It turns out that Ozzy Gillespie was using the same technique. It's about non-thinking, we just sort of feel the note and it comes out. When I practise today, I play over standard-era and bebop changes. When I decided to come out of the closet as a

trumpet player in 1993, I realised that I needed to work on what my individual 'voice' was going to be. And what made the most sense at the time, since I was primarily known as an electric guitarist, was to arrive at a trumpet sound that would be as much as possible like a distorted electric guitar. So that's what I did."

On the *Hard Edge* album, this approach means that Rhys is the perfect foil for the sprawling free improvisations of his frontline partner, guitarist Gary Smith, leader of the London-based power trio Mass. The two musicians were introduced by the Paratactile label boss Trevor Manwaring, who also hooked Rhys up with keyboardist Pat Thomas, a genuinely mercenary player whose work straddles live electronics, free improv, jazz and drum 'n' bass. Smith's colleagues in Mass, ex-God bassist Gary Jeff and current Ice/Lake drummer Lou Coccolle, complete the album's personnel. On certain *Hard Edge* tracks, the sizzling, elephantine brass-blasts which characterised Neon and the later *Septile* EP are tempered with more intimate, bebop-derived lines, elsewhere. Rhys realises his aim to sound like a fuzzed-out Tony Iommi: "I wanted to achieve as much variety as possible in the playing I did," he explains. "Some of the tracks would be open trumpet, some with mute, and some completely distorted. It was really a dream come true when I got the sound down."

Sometimes it is the key to *Hard Edge*: Half the record was recorded live at South London's Moat Studios, with all live players jamming structured improvisations, the other half displays Chatham and Smith's first-take overdubs on drum 'n' bass loops generated by Pat Thomas. No frisky programming here: takes that didn't work first time found themselves in the trash. Rhys's freedom glands were whetted for the first time since working briefly in Fredric Rzewski's *Musica Electronica Viva* outfit almost 35 years ago, when an association which brought him into contact with jazzers such as Anthony Braxton, Sam Rivers, Carla Bley, Steve Lacy and Cecil Taylor. "After an initial playing session with the musicians in London, I loosened up and decided to go for it," Rhys explains. "It's a different kind of sound than I would normally go for, and I ended up being very pleased with the result. I had forgotten how much I like playing with live musicians, especially drums and bass. It was a real pleasure working with Lou and Gary. Jeff Drum 'n' bass is all very well, but nothing replaces the energy of a live drummer and bass player on stage."

Gary has a kind of minimalist, baroque death-trance approach to playing bass which fits right in with his trumpet aesthetic — it was a match made in heaven as far as I was concerned."

As for the pairing with guitarist Gary Smith, he says: "On one of the pieces I asked Gary to play his characteristic stereo 'wave' shape for the track called, appropriately enough, 'Wave'. As he was doing it, I untuned my trumpet, closed my eyes and pretended I was back in Hawaii during my surfing days. It was so cool — I really felt like I was on my surfboard riding with a huge crescent shape."

With new connections forged, Rhys is enthusiastic about the prospect of toughening his alloys of freeplay and electronics. "It's one thing to superimpose styles or paste them together one after another in a collage. The result can be a patchwork of ideas that can be interesting in that the contrast is ironic, or cynical, or surprising. But once the surprise has gone, is it still interesting? I don't think so, not unless it has gone through the composer's filter or voice. And if it has managed to do that then it isn't a collage any more, it's an amalgamation or a true synthesis of ideas, stitched together so tightly that only the truest pair of critical scissors could pick the various components apart."

With a slew of collaborative ventures in his diary, Rhys's stars remain aligned to his satisfaction. "The composer's art is a lonely one," he concludes. "I wanted to get back to being a musician, which is more social. It's the first time, since the Darmstadt school had its heyday in the late '50s, where I feel Europe is the true pioneer and leader in a field that I'm vitally concerned with and actively a part of. I'm in the right place, no question." *Hard Edge* is released this month on The Wire Editions.



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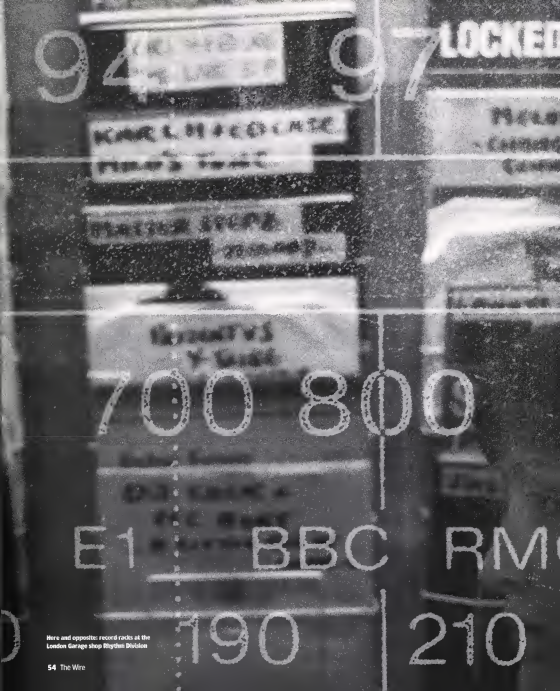
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Here and opposite: record racks at the London Garage shop Rhythmic Division

If you live in London, perhaps you've scanned the FM spectrum and come to a halt at a pirate station whose sound you can't quite finger or figure. It's got House music's sinky pansche, but the rhythms wrong — too fitful and funkied up, and besides, there's an MC jabbering over the top, Jungle style. Maybe it's Jungle, then — but it's too slow, too seamy. Sometimes it's a bit like American R&B — except it sounds druggy, the wrong kind of druggy, like Timbaland on E.

What you have tuned into is the latest in a series of mutations spawned from London's multiracial rave scene, the next evolutionary stage beyond Speed Garage (belt a swerve sideways from Jungle). This new style has a name, albeit an unsatisfactorily dry, technical

(all bump 'n' flex, bitch 'n' grind) than House, with its reticular and metronomic kick drum patterns.

Two-step transforms Garage into a kind of slow motion Jungle: a languorous frenzy of micro-breakbeats, hesitations and hyper-synopsations, moments when the beat seems to pause, posed, and hold its breath. On a basic level, this effect is achieved by removing every second and fourth kick from the four-to-the-floor pulse, creating a lurching, falterfunk feel. More adventurous two-step producers program irregular kick drum patterns which syncopate with the bassline, akin to Timbaland's double-time or triple/quadruple/quintuple-time locks. Two-step has actually taken the 'speed' out of

adult hardcore

Two-step Garage, a cyborg amalgam of New York R&B and London Jungle, is lover's rock for the rave generation. Simon Reynolds dissects the UK's latest breakbeat mutation, and talks to the scene's prime producers: The Drem Team, Dem 2, Ramsey & Fen and KMA

one two-step, increasingly a general rubric for all kinds of jittery, irregular rhythms that don't conform to Garage's traditional four-to-the-floor pulse. But somebody needs to come up with a more attractive tag, one that captures two-step's lipsmacking lasciviousness. Because all the juice squeezed out of Jungle by the post-techstep school of scientific drum 'n' bass has oozed back in the succulent form of two-step.

Truthfully, Jungle stemmed from House music. It has a reggae influence, but it's still House," MC Navigator, from the Jungle prate Kool FM, insisted back in 1994. Three years later, Jungle returned to the source, when its rude bwoy spirit and rhythmic science violently possessed the body of Garage (the most soulful and soulful form of House), in the process creating a new London scene: Speed Garage.

But Jungle's relationship with Garage actually runs deeper. In the middle of the decade, the second room at Jungle clubs usually bumped to Garage. Instead of chills to Ambient, prate radio stations often programmed Garage shows for mellow moments in the weekend (Saturday morning, Sunday afternoon). It was on these prate shows that DJs started pinching up their Garage imports (by artists like Masters At Work, Kern Chandler, Todd Edwards) to 130 bpm, giving them the extra 'oomph' required by the London Jungle audience. According to Spooky, a member of the DJ collective The Drem Team, DJs favoured the dub versions of the US tracks because "not having much vocal element, you could play the dubs faster without them sounding odd." These near-instrumentals also left gaps for the MCs to do their stuff. Soon the DJs started making homegrown Garage tracks that sounded like their prate shows — faster than the US sound, with Junglistic sub-bass, dubwise FX and ragga chants timestretched so that the vocal fissured and buckled like the wings of a metal-fatigued Boeing 707.

This UK underground Garage also radically intensified the aspect of the New York sound that most appealed to Jungle-reared ears: intricate percussion patterns, highly textured drum sounds, and above all, the slippery, snappy, syncopated snares and busy, bustling hi-hats that make Garage much more funky and polyrhythmically perverse



Speed Garage, or at least the sensation of velocity, because removing two out of every four kicks subtracts that steady pulsing energy. The effect is similar to the way the dub bassline in Jungle used to run at half-time under the frenetic breaks. Indeed, some two-step tracks have a ska or rocksteady-like skanker feel.

To compensate for the energy deficit, two-step producers hype the funk by making every element in a track work simultaneously as rhythm, melody and texture. Organ vamps, horn stabs, keyboard pads, vocal licks, all interlock like cogs with the percussion patterns, which are processed through effects until the rhythm track alone offers a tantalising panoply of textures: crunchy, squeaky, spangly, woody, spongy, scratchy.

These tactile ambres combine with the twitchy triplets and syncopations to create weird cross-rhythm effects — nicks and barbs that seem to snag your flesh and tug your body every which way.

"The rhythm track is not just the backing for a song any more," declare Dem 2, the Essex-based duo of Spencer Edwards and Dean Boylan, whose nubile nu-funk anthem "Destiny" was the UK blueprint for two-step. "The beats, the various instrument voicings, and any vocals within a track all carry equal amounts of importance — any one can be the hook that sticks in the mind." Although Dem 2 correctly argue that you can hear this rhythmic melody/texturhythm simultaneously at work across the gamut of contemporary dance music, it's undeniable that UK Garage mostly assimilated this knowledge from drum 'n' bass — many of the leading two-step producers spent their apprenticeship programming Jungle. But right now, it's hard to imagine any neurofunk producer building a groove as seductively sleek and spongy as "Destiny".

This is ironic, because two-step is in many ways a reassertion of the Jungle influence in reaction to the alarmingly rapid crossover of first-wave Speed Garage, which simply proved too accessible to mainstream House clubbers. Two-step is a semi-conscious attempt to make Garage a London thing (even an East London thing) again, rather than a shortlived nationwide bad. The similarity with Jungle comes across in the way two-step DJs mix. "With traditional Garage and House, the underlying beat and

instrumental arrangement is more continuous and pulsing," says "Bat" Bhattacharya, the resident two-step expert on the on-line discussion forum *ukdance*. "New York Garage is designed so that the DJ mixes in a new track with a slow, continuous fade up. But two-step, like Hardcore and Jungle, is far more amenable for chopping and cutting with the crossfader, the sort of HipHop techniques you can't use with a House pulsebeat because it sounds funny."

You can also hear the Jungle ancestry in two-steps low end sensuality, which has evolved way beyond the wah-wah/dread bass that drove the Speed Garage tracks that were emerging two years ago. Listen to London pirate stations such as Freck,

Tina Moore, CoCo (Pension) and a more pragmatic "trackhead" approach that uses anonymous session divas as raw material (Todd Terry and Nitro Deluxe creating stammer riffs by "playing" the vocal sample on a sampling keyboard).

Jungle producers like Omri Tiro took these crude techniques to the next level of sophistication, moulding and morphing diva vocals into a sort of passion plasma, a body-without-organs fluid. Then, just as the hypergasmic diva was fading from Jungle, "vocal science" flickered back to life somewhere else — in US Garage, of all places. On his remixes of St Germain's "Alabama Blues," as well as his own tracks, New Jersey producer Todd Edwards developed a technique of crosshatching brief vocal snatches

The Dream Team



Dem 2



Mission or Smooth, and you'll hear bubbling bassline melodies, chiming bass detonations, and pressure drop booms that have nothing to do with House as hitherto known. The baleful electro dub rumble, plinky melody riffs and winning synth tones of Steve Gurley's remix of "Things Are Newer" by Operator & Battled hark back even further than Jungle — to the sleep 'n' bass era of Unique 3 and Nightmares On Wax, that dawn of the 90s moment when the British merged House and reggae for the first (but not last) time.

If Jungle really did stem from House, as Navigator claimed, the true continuity between the two genres is not rhythmic or textural, it's in the use of vocals. Between 1991-94, Jungle's heyday, the bulk of Hardcore/Jungle anthems relied on sampled diva vocals as primary hooks. Producers would lift them from old House or R&B classics, or from CDs packed with a capella voices recorded specifically for sampling. Certain classic vocal phrases would be reworked time and again, with producers using similar techniques to breakbeat manipulation: acceleration, pitchshifting, timestretching, looping, filtering.

When techstep achieved dominance in 1996, vocal samples began to disappear from drum 'n' bass. But the House-Hardcore-Jungle continuum of diva worship didn't end. It just branched sideways into Speed Garage. You can hear this process at work by tracking the career of Steve Gurley. As a member of the Jungle outfit Foul Play, he sampled diva vocals from Kleeer and SOS Band for tracks like "Finest Illusion" and "Open Your Mind," going solo as Rogue Unit, he crafted a gorgeous drum 'n' bass rework of "Say I'm Your Number One," the 1965 hit by Brit soul chanteuse Princess Today. Gurley is a leading two-step producer, doing damage with torrid, diva-driven tunes like his remix of Lenny Fontana's "Spit On The Sun".

Traditional New York Garage privileges the classy vocal, draping its melodious melisma over the groove. In contrast, two-step producers subordinate the singer to functional priorities, slicing 'n' dicing the vocal samples into staccato percussive riffs that interlock with the groove to create extra syncopations. "Bat" Bhattacharya uses the term "vocal science" to define this vivisection of the diva, which effectively transforms the singer into a component of the drum kit. Two-step's vocal technology has resituated Garage on the other side of House's great divide: songs versus tracks; melody versus rhythm 'n' FX. From its beginnings in the mid-80s, there has been a tension in House between veneration of the Bag Voice (Darryl Pandy, Robert Owens,

into a melodic-percussive honeycomb of blissful hicups, so burstingly rapturous it's almost painful to the ear.

Edwards's music had an extraordinary impact on London's emergent Speed Garage scene. If anyone in two-step has picked up Todd's baton and run wild with it, it's Dem 2. Both "Destiny" and the duo's 1997 "Don't Cry Out" of Groove Connection 2's "Club Lonely" are ear-boggling feats of robo-glossolalia. The latter mix sounds like the missing link between Zapp's vocoder funk mantra "More Bounce To The Ounce" and Maurizio's dub-House. Snipping the vocal track into syllables and vowels, feeding the phonetic fragments through filters and FX, Dem 2 create a voluptuous melancholy of cyber-sobs and lump-in-throat glitches. "Whispering, wounded 'droids crying out in desolation" as Spencer Edwards puts it.

"You can add a different soul that wasn't there," is how Dem 2 describe this kind of vocal remixology. Deconstruction is not too strong a term, because what is being dismantled is the very idea of the voice as the expression of a whole human subject. "Instead of the 'organic' female singer of early Garage, you get a legion of dismembered doll parts," says journalist Bethan Cole, who is writing a book about the diva in dance music. On a track like Dem 2's remix of Cloud 9's "Do You Want Me," the vocal — a paroxysm of hairtrigger blunts and stuttered spasms of passion — doesn't resemble a human being so much as an out-of-control desiring machine.

Two-step's vocal science has intersected with the anti-naturalistic studio techniques of American R&B, whose producers have long been digitally processing voices to make them sound even more mellifluous and delectably ultra-sweet. US R&B tunes are routinely given a two-step remix these days. Two superior examples are The Dream Team's sublime transformation of Aaliyah's "My Desire" into a gamelan-blinking tumble of undulant percussion, and the unofficial bootleg mix of Brandy & Monica's "The Boy Is Mine," currently in heavy rotation on the pirates. But two-steps' favorite R&B goddess is Aaliyah, whose Timbaland-produced "One In A Million" has been extensively plagiarized. Best of the bunch is Groove Chronicles' "Stone Cold," which samples a handful of vocal phrases ("You don't know what you do to me," "desire" and other splinters of yearning) and deploys them to create endlessly fresh accents against the groove. The original's mood is totally subverted what had been a devotional paean becomes a baleful ballad of sexual dependency, with Aaliyah digitally disintegrated into a multi-sacked wrath of herself, stranded in a locked groove of desolated desire.

Dna worship has other ramifications too. Compared with the unwritten boy's own constitutions of Techno, electronica and drum 'n' bass, in the UK Garage scene there is a striking deference to female taste. Pirate MCs dedicate tunes to 'the ladies' massive', and most Garage DJ producers share the opinion of Ramsey & Fen, whose mix CD, *Locked On Volume 3*, is probably the best introduction on record to the full span of UK Garage. "When the girls start singing along to a tune like our own 'Love Bug' it gets the guys hyper! If the ladies love it, they all love it."

Feminine Pressure is the name of an all-female Garage DJ crew. In a very real sense, UK Garage is organised around the pressure of feminine desire; a key factor in the

of music, drugs, technology and popular desire.

'Vibe' works through evolution rather than revolution: producers simultaneously giving the people what they want and slyly seducing them into wanting things they've never had. DJs pulling off the same trick through sheer sleight of mix, all the while carefully avoiding a lapse into disparate (vibe-less) eclecticism. And 'vibe' only really occurs when music is a component in a subcultural engine, an urban folktale with its own privileged sites and rites. Its musical methodology may be postmodern, but two-step Garage has no truck with Techno notions of the post-geographical or transcending the local — hence the recurrent variations on the old Hardcore theme,

Ramsey & Fen



scene's emergence was when women hybridised in masse from the Junglist dancefloor, fed up with the bombard of two-step, devoid of melody and vocal. Two-step Garage bears the same relation to Jungle that lover's rock did to dub and roots reggae: it's the feminised counterpart of a 'serious' male genre. Like two-step, lover's rock was a UK-spanned hybrid, merging sly US soul and Jamaican rhythm, restoring treble to the bass-heavy frequency spectrum, and replacing militant spirituality with romantic yearning. With pirate MCs sending shouts out to 'all the couples cuddling at home', two-step is lover's Jungle. It's also Hardcore for grown-ups.

Ravers who were teenagers during the 1989-92 era are now in their mid-to-late twenties, with jobs, marriages, families. At the East London Garage outlet Rhythm Division, I saw one of the male sales staff behind the counter bottle-feeding a six-month old baby, who seemed utterly unperturbed by the thunderous basslines booming out of the speakers; later that day I picked up a flyer for a club that boasted it was "the very first rave with a genuine

crèche for the children — with registered child minders, 5 quid per child. So there's no excuse, bring the fucking kids" rather than abandon the drug and dance lifestyle. The first rave generation is finding ways to accommodate it to their new adult circumstances — coupled, relative affluence. The Garage remakes of Hardcore tunes like Jonny L's 'Hurt You So', or the samples from Shit Up And Dance's 1989 '10 To Get It' redeployed in Some Tera's two-step anthem 'Lost In Vegas' — these 'retentions' represent not so much old skool nostalgia as a celebration of continuity. From Hardcore to two-step, the subcultural infrastructure of pirate radio, specialist record stores, duplates and so on abides. The dress code, crowd rituals and other elements might have evolved (MCs now superimpose a smooth R&B patina over the Junglists' Creole hybrid of reggaetón and Cocody patois), but the subcultural project remains the same: the creation of 'vibe'.

'Vibe' is UK Garage's biggest buzzword (check AfterShock's classic "Slow To The Vibe (Dern 2 Remix)" or Tuff Jam's "Vibe-Vibe" remixes). On one level, of course, 'vibe' is just one of those nebulous buzzwords, like 'street' or 'real', used to evoke blackness. But it's also the quality that most of us are chasing down when we listen to music: that palpable forcefield of tribal energy generated by the perfect convergence

"Just 4 U London". Like Jungle, two-step is heard at its utmost through a big sound system, by a body surrounded by other bodies. Which is why two-step, like most Hardcore dance styles, can sometimes sound flat when heard on an isolated 12", outside the DJ's mix, without MC chat or the participatory clamour of the audience. If you want to catch the feeling, the next best thing to being there is to tape pirate radio transmissions for free.

Compared with the anhedonic severity of its estranged cousin, drum 'n' bass, one of the most striking things about two-step is the scene's relentless emphasis on pleasure. The names of clubs and labels evoke melt-in-your-mouth, sensuous indulgence — Cookies & Cream, Nice N' Ripe, Chocolate Boy, Ice Cream, Pure Silk, Twice As Nice — and mirror the sonic penchant for warm, organic textures and thick, lush production. Garage's fetish for 'riceness' and luxury — champagne and cocaine, designer labels, 'rude bimmers' — has a long history in black British dance culture, going back to the pre-rave dancehall and R&B scenes. The most charitable reading of notions of 'living large' is that they are a refusal of an allotted

place in the class system, an insistence that 'nothing is too good for us'. A more hostile viewpoint argues that Garage's opulence is more hyper-conformism, a deluded mimicry of the high life.

Either way, cocaine is the perfect signifier for Garage's ambivalent politics — not only because of its associations with prestige, but because it's a drug that stimulates the appetite for all pleasures, and because the dynamics of its use (inextinguishable, basically) offer a kind of parody of consumerism. Ironically, Garage seems to fit cocaine like a glove: the patina of deluxe sound; the fidgety, febrile beats that feel *rich* with desire. The 'cocaine ear' favours bright, toasty sounds — hence Garage's glossy glaze of crisp hi-hats, shrill brass, gleaming synths and treble vocals.

In this corner of clubland, the shift from Ecstasy to cocaine represents a kind of fall from paradise, with *rave's* androgynous sexuality displaced by re-politised gender roles and rapacious sexuality. And although the standard image of the cokehead is of a chatterbox who finds himself endlessly charming, the effect in the clubs has been to

“All the juice squeezed out of jungle by scientific drum 'n' bass has oozed back in the succulent form of two-step”

replace loved-up bonhome with charlie-up hauteur. "On coke you don't feel the need to talk because you've got so much brilliance within yourself," says Bethan Cole. "But there's no E-like empathy, it's a hollow feeling." You can feel the difference in the music: the gaseous diva vocals of Hardcore mirrored the swoony, boundary melting intimacy of Ecstasy, while two-step's staccato vocal stabs accentuate coke's cold, brittle glitter.

Drug phenomenologist David Lenson describes the 'third stage' of cocaine intoxication as hypersensitivity, a frenzy in which desire is unable to focus on any single object (kinky sex, grandiose fantasies, other drugs) for more than a few seconds before flitting off elsewhere. Ultimately, the mania binges on cocaine itself — desire for desire. Not far beyond hypersensitivity lies the paranoia and undead delirium of 'stimulant dysphoria'. Whether anybody on the Garage dancefloor regularly reaches hypersensitivity is beside the point — the music's own internal dynamic is pushing it into the twilight zone. Often hidden on B-sides or released on white labels that circulate for only a few weeks, two-step is producing some headbust tunes that merge bested vocals, convulsively DJ unfriendly beats and svelte-but-smoother textures. Easier to find pinpoints of this darkside Garage include DJ Riche & Klasse's 'Madness On The Street', Skycap's 97 classic 'Endorphin', and 'Plenty More' 'Get It' by rising producer Chris Mac — tracks whose unsettling blend of brittle and supple, desperation and desire, show how the pursuit of pure pleasure can take music to some pretty strange places. Dem 2 also look set to probe 'a darker, deeper electro direction' in 1999, what Dean Boylan describes as "Gary Numan meets Tina Turner". The duo are also starting an overtly experimental label called Purple Record. For now, seek out their alter-ego US Alliances "Grunge Dub", with its angular anti-groove and gobbling, strung out vocal (imagine a crackhead Bobby McFerrin).

The original 1993 version of darkside Hardcore was a catastrophic plunge, the first rave generation suffering from E-induced malaise en masse. With Garage, though,

'darkness' feels like a normalised component of the scene, a zone some cross into if they overdo the stimulants, perhaps even a phase of any given club night (after 4am, say, when some of the clientele have crossed the optimal threshold of enjoyable wiredness, or reached a weekly apprehension of the void at the heart of the hedonistic lifestyle). In fact, dark Garage existed right from the earliest days of the London scene. KMA's 'Cape Fear' combined breakbeat rhythms, ominous 'video vocals' and destabilising bass warps that triggered crowd pandemonium the first time the tune was played out in late 96. "You could see the goosebumps rising on everybody's neck, the hair standing on end," says KMA producer/vocalist Six. "The crowd erupted, they were so confused about what just happened they forced the DJ to rewind the track."

The anecdote recalls the early stunned responses to the body-baffling pitchbent beats in Goldie's 'Terminator', the track that pioneered darkcore. Six talks like Goldie, declaring "My music is like a movie" and "I see myself as a painter". After following 'Cape Fear' with another moody, breakbeat Garage anthem, 'Kaoic Madness', Six tired of KMA's darkside reputation and decided to go in a smoother, more musical direction — just as Goldie did circa "Angel". The result was the *Rn-Con Mission* EP, whose highlight, 'Blue Kards', meshed disappointed emotions, phased vocals, bluesy guitar and asymmetrical beats to create one of 1998's most exhilarating sonic conclusions.

What's exciting about 'Blue Kards' and other dark two-step tunes that have surfaced in the last year is that the music often sounds like a hybrid where the grafts haven't wholly taken. Sometimes it sounds 'wrong', but only in the way that 1993 darkcore sounded not quite there yet. If you want seamless, fully realised fusion, listen to drum 'n' bass, a style that quickly arrived at a definitive version of itself and accordingly spent the last two years scratching its head wondering where to go next. By contrast, two-step sounds like it has a whole world of places left to explore. □ A two-step Garage discography is available on Simon Reynolds's Website or members.aol.com/blissout/

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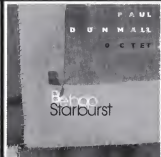
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Playlists from the outer limits of planet

sound

Kosmische 15

Can One More Night (Spoon)
Mouse On Mars Schnick-Schnack (Too Pure)
Pole Street (Kiff SM)
Karamasov Sun Always Shines In Space (Satellite)
DOM Fackeln Im Sturm (Harvest/Profan)
Ron Grainer Dr. Who Theme (TVT)
Space Raiders Glam Raid (Skint)
Radio 9 Motank (Promo)
Ø Mikro Makro (Naton)
Wisdom Of Harry Faux Lux (Static Caravan)
Rolf Harris Stylophone Trad Tunes (Philips)
Milestone Yellow 6 (Enraptured)
Steel Man (Mile Plateaux)
Workshop Escapade (Caprimpha)
Stereolab We're Not Adult Orientated (Duophonic)
Compiled by Leon Kosmiche, Upstairs at the Garage, London, monthly

15 Incredibly Strange Records

Vincent Price Witchcraft & Magic (An Adventure In Demomology) (Capitol)
Various What Can I Do? Songs And Games To Do While Sitting (BBC)
Cosmic Sounds The Zodiac (Elektra)
Various Stereo Spectacular Demonstration & SFX (Webcor)
Bobby & Betty Go To The Moon (Happy House)
Various Minutemen: A Sequence Of 51 Tiny Masterpieces (Pipe)
Wild Man Fischer An Evening With Wild Man Fischer (Reprise)
Various The Wicker Man OST (Trunk)
Dr Timothy Leary LSD (Pave Records)
Various The Stereo Disc (Capitol)
Stanley Unwin Robotay Dealers With Unwin (Marble Arch)
Various Billy Smart's Circus: Recorded Live In The Big Top (MFP)
Stan Kelly O Liverpool We Love You (Xtra)
Mao Tse Tung Quotations From Chairman Mao (Polydot)
Various Tapped Wires: Private Conversations Of Famous People (Route1)
Compiled by Shane Quenton, The Garden Of Earthly Delights, CRK 89 8PM, Milton Keynes, Fridays 10pm-midnight

Progress Report 15

Dock Boggs Oh Death (Follows)
Jim Carroll Pools Of Mercury (Mercury)
Hasi Adkins What The Hell Was I Thinking (Fat Possum)
Bonnie 'Prince' Billy I See A Darkness (Domino)

Current 93 Soft Black Stars (Durtro)
Coil Winter Solstice (Eskaton)
Kim Cascone Blue Cube (Rastemusic)
Fennesz Il Libro Mio (Tanz Hotel)
Pan Sonic A Blast First
Ultra Red Pleasure Grounds (Mile Plateaux)
Merzbow/Genesis P-Orridge A Perfect Pan (Cold Spring)
Another Headache The Wholesale Sound Of Dream (WIP)
Speedbranch & Jansky Noise Welcome To Exorcise (Leaf)
Stillupsteypa & Irr.App (Ext) Tptth Or Tetaptth (Fire Inc)
Volcano The Bear Yak Folks Y'Are (Pickled Egg)
Compiled by Frank Kien, Radio Brunel (81000), 999 PM, Fridays 9-11pm

Auf Abwegen 15

Chris Watson Outside The Circle Of Fire (Touch)
Hematic Sunsets Musik Aus Dem Amoclab 1 (Klang Der Festung)
David Kristian/Sian Tacoma Narrows Bridge (AllenB Recordings)
Multer Diagonalmy (Genesungwerk)
Intravene Flotation Toy Warning (Auf Abwegen)
Fennesz Hotel Parallel (Mego)
Kallabris 81° n8, 1 78° ol (Drone Records)
Orphx Nullity (Hands)
Bruce Gilbert Instant Shed Vol 1 (Sub Pop)
Cristian Vogel Busca Invisibles (Tresor)
COH Enter Tinnitus (Rastemusic)
John Duncan Crucible (Die Stadt)
Institut Für Feilmotorik 10° (IFFM)
The Black Dog Peel Sessions (Warp)
Dominique Petitgand 11 Petites Compositions Feminales (Staalplaat)
Compiled by Auf Abwegen, Münster, Germany Website www.aufabwegen.de

The Office Ambience

Can Can Box Live 1971-77 (Spoon)
Hushshien The End Of Law (Sui Rosa)
Various The Roots Of Garbelen (World Artistry)



Add N To (X) Avant Hard (Mule)
Faust Ravnando (Klangbad)
Swollen Members Balance (Jazz Fudge)
Pere Ubu Dub Housing (Cooking Vinyl)
Goodspeed You Black Emperor! Slow Not For New Zero Kanada EP (Kranley)
Z'ev Ghost Stories (Soleilmoon)
Tom Waits Mule Variations (Epitaph)
Jon Hassell Fascinoma (Water Lily Acoustics)
ISO ISO (Alcohol)
Matthew Shipp Duo with William Parker DNA (Thirsty Ear)
Isotope 217/Commander Mindfuck/Designer Hoshi/User Password: Lebar (Aesthetics)
Novisad Novisad (Toni)
Compiled by The Wire Sound System

sound check

In the drink: April's selected albums and singles

reviews a-z

- **Kaoru Abe/Motoharu Yoshizawa/Toshinori Kondo/Derek Bailey**
- **Add N To (X)**
- **Maryanne Amacher**
- **Aono Jikken**
- **Koji Asano**
- **Asura**
- **David Bohman**
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- **City Boy Players**
- **Card Decca**
- **Electro-Putin**
- **Faust**
- **Terry Fox**
- **Fred Frith Guitar Quartet**
- **Future Pilot AKA**
- **Hush/Heen**
- **Horn, Kendig & Dickey**
- **Saeko Ikeda & Asif Tashir**
- **In The Nursery**
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- **Various: The Roots Of Gmelan**
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- **Tom Waits**
- **What We Live**
- **Jeh Wobbie**
- **Z'ev**

In Brief reviews: avant rock, classical, critical beats, global and jazz; plus round-ups of new releases and compilations

Kaoru Abe/Motoharu Yoshizawa/Toshinori Kondo/Derek Bailey

ADD N TO (X) STANLEY FUMATEI COMPANY BJS CD

Here's a miraculously unreleased document from Derek Bailey's first job of Japan in 1978. By the early 70s the nascent Japanese free improvisation scene had found its ideal sponsor in a young student of French poetry called Akira "Akiura" Aida. Aida had dropped out of university in 1969 to found The Japan Real Jazz Ensemble with the premier local exponents — saxophonist Abe, bass player Yoshizawa and pioneering nose-free guitarist Masayuki Takayanagi. His role as critic, concert promoter and general facilitator soon became pivotal. Aida suggested Steve Lacy, Milford Graves and finally Bailey to Japan, both to tour and record with Japanese musicians. Bailey was to be his last completed project — Aida died of a brain tumor in 1982 in December the same year.

Bailey's TS trio has already been documented on the extremely rare "Morgue" double LP *New Signs, Old Sounds* and Disk Union's sporadically unavailable CD *Duo And Trio Improvisation*. But this is the last chance for anyone not there to hear just how these minds melded wordlessly on one night in the Tokyo suburb of Machida.

Bailey is on typically uncompromising form: his trademark volume stats, harmonic flutters and feedback murmurs are all present and correct. At last Abe was nearing the end of his left, gibbering career (he too would be dead within six months), and his playing was not what it had been five years earlier. Unfortunately, the beautiful round sharp edge of his tone is dulled by the layer of dirt hum coating this 20-year-old audience tape, but Yoshizawa's maturing extended bass technique and his inventive humor more than compensate. Kondo is more of a revelation: Using the full tonal range of his trumpet, from gossamer nuptial to high-pitched saps, it's his language that most closely mirrors Bailey's.

ALAN CURPINS

Add N To (X)

Avant Hard
MUTE STUM 10 CD

With a title like *Avant Hard* and a cover reminiscent of the schlocky Japanese sci-fi flick that inspired the *Highly Suspicious* Power Rangers, you just know this is going to be a disappointment. Last time around, Add N To (X) harvested their absolute synthpunks with a

sensibility that was as clever and cutting as it was sonic. On *Avant Hard* they let the itch that inevitably comes with the territory get the better of them.

There are plenty of great noises and nice moments, but there's nothing that approximates the astringent blues mockery "King Wasp," or the visceral power of "Black Regent" from last year's *On The Wires Of Our Nerves*. Everything seems a little too forced and they sound too much like the ex-art school students they are. "Skills" has Pflon 9 *From Outer Space* glossed and a belching Speak & Spell machine riding Ray McVay beats and John Barry guitar riffs. "Sawer's Going To Teach Himself Who's Boss" starts out in the jungle, the mighty jungle, and then marches down the never-ending hallway in *The Shining*. Elsewhere, they dedicate a self-destructing electro punk number to the memory of the gothic, dance and blend George "Hartbeats" strings with emerging synth bonbons ("Revenge Of The Black Regent"), which by the way, ends in exactly the same way as Black Sabbath's "After Forever."

By the end of *Avant Hard* however, the group gathers momentum. The single, "Metal Fingers In My Body," generates a pretty fearsome nose/groove and is easily the best track on the album. Meanwhile, "Oh Yeah, Oh No" imagines Stereolab jamming with Walker/Wendy Carlos circa *A Clockwork Orange* and "Machine Is Bored With Love" sounds like the closing song to an Italian sex farce from the 70s, with lead vocals courtesy of Peter Fiampton's tabula before taking a break and returning as Brian Ferry in zero gravity.

PETER SHAPIRO

Maryanne Amacher

Sound Characters (Making The Third Ear)
DNRK 12343 CD

Over the past three decades Maryanne Amacher has been creating works of brooding magnificence, constructions in sound of such epic proportions and deep emotional resonance that you had to go to them, rather than the other way round.

The phantom sounds, alien tone clusters and distant rumblings collected together for the first time on *Sound Characters* constitute only a tiny fraction of her incredible output. Even so, they represent an outstanding achievement. Using the architectural features of specific buildings and other studio-produced sounds, Maryanne Amacher's series of solo-related projects, *Plot*, *For Sound-Jamned Areas*, extracts from which

make their disc debut here, involves radical shifts in both time and place. Locations have included the 21st Century Cultural Information Center in Tokushima, Japan; the three-story Maastricht in Rotterdam, and the Kunsthaus Krems Minorenkerche in Austria, formerly an 18th-century monastery. Using complex multichannel loudspeaker systems, Amacher has evolved an acoustic science by which "the rooms themselves become speakers, producing sound which is felt throughout the body as well as the head." Described in terms of dance and drama, these are performances on a huge scale. Volume is everything, whether it's the size and dimension of the space involved or the high amplification levels required for an audience to experience sound literally pouring out of its ears.

Amacher has consequently shown little interest in releasing her work on disc. What would be the point? The "makers of the cultural stereo listening environment" are all too obvious. Nor will the reconstructing powers of her music occur when played back over headphones. If nothing else, this remarkable selection of recordings makes plain how narrow the band of sensory experience provided by conventional urban existence has become. From the scintillating acoustic clarity of "Head Rhythm 1" to the vast seething planes of "A Slee Into It, Imagining 1000 Years", these fragments strain against the confines of the standard CD format. The resulting tensions and intensities are, however, enough in themselves to leave you hungry, not just for more of this astonishing music, but for louder volumes, longer durations, bigger spaces.

KEN HOLLINGS

Aono Jikken

A Page Of Sound/Hess
GOLD MOUNTAIN SPSCD CD

In The Nursery

Man With A Movie Camera
RTH CD/BOXSET CD/BOXSET CD

Because silent movies can't talk back, they are easy prey for musicians out to raise their artistic profile by annexing themselves to a well-known film classic. Currently a fashionable area of funded cultural production, usually with negligible results, it should be seriously discouraged. But cynicism is a poor response to the obvious love and energy the pair pour into their film projects. If nothing else, Seattle performance poet Aono Jikken and Sheffield's post-industrial art veterans in The Nursery deserve credit for championing two

neglected montage pioneers. Japanese director Teinosuke Kinugasa's *A Page Of Madness* (1926) is about a schizophrenic dancer committed to an asylum for drowning her baby. Aono Jikoro's thrumless task is how to do justice to Kinugasa's fractured narrative structure, which alternates between flashbacks and the present, between the actual and the symbolic, while all the time shifting the film's point of view. John Zorn could possibly keep up with Kinugasa's rapid cuts, Aono Jikoro don't even try. Founded by taiko drum master Willem Bouvier, the theatrical Japanese-American collective create a generic "Japanese" soundscape with vocally blown, beated and bowed Oriental wind, metal and bamboo instruments and toys. Their attractive enough soundtrack, quoddically suggests narrative coherence, when the point of Kinugasa's jerky, rhythmic editing was to disintegrate the states of consciousness of its protagonists into the dancer's mounting tragedy. The director himself appended a soundtrack in the 70s, but *A Page Of Madness* is so compelling it rolls by fine in silence.

So too Doga Vertov's brilliant *Man With A Movie Camera* (1929). The noise symphony he worked into his later *Enthusiasm* showed he was as imaginative an editor of sound as image. Add to that Pierre Henry's soundtrack for *Moscow Currents*, and in *The Nursery* have to be pretty damn footloose to go this route. Despite endorsements from one Sir Graham Roberts, who claims ITN's soundtrack helped him win a familiar film award, it's difficult to envisage their music interacting with Vertov's imagery in any useful way. A committed communist and documentarist, Vertov misapprehended the Russian revolution — yet to turn sour on him — with dazzling dialectical advantages of images and effects that celebrated Soviet victory and directed workers to the tasks ahead. ITN's overblown electro-like score hardly constitutes a challenging dialectical opposition to the film maker's thrilling montage of facts.

Whether silent or talked, any decent film is inherently musical anyway. Future soundtrackers could do everyone a good turn by leaving cult classics alone and

concentrating on the crap movies that need all the help they can get.

UNA KOFF

Koji Asano *Moonmoon*

SOLstice SOL 1099 CD

Koji Asano *Sunshine Filtering Through Foliage*

SOLstice SOL999 CD

Koji Asano *Avananches*

SOLstice SOL1199 CD

Japan's Koji Asano is barely 25 years old and yet he's already amassed a formidable catalogue embracing barren electroacoustic compositions, single note minimalist piano epics, rock noise, strings and computer glitch works. On recent projects he has soundtracked performance art happenings and actions as well as participating in an ISDN-linked transcontinental performance with Sensorband's Akira Tanaka. Even Jim O'Rourke would be left gawping at the depth and range of his output.

Both his titles and his visuals are a vital part of Asano's conception, expressively contextualising his musical abstracts. *Sunshine Filtering Through Foliage* creates never-bearant clouds of subliminally throbbing electronics from unidentified sound sources. *Moonmoon*, the best of these three discs, sees Asano back on piano, obsessively hammering out simple, spiraling



On deck: Rob Swift



Rob Swift The Ablist

ASHMOEL 0093 CD

Rob Swift, a leading turntablist and frontman of The X-men, cites Herbie Hancock's "Rockit" as the beacon that guided him out of the darkness — darkness in this case being the notion that there's more to a turntable than party DJ'ing. Well, yes, it was inspiring to see Grandmaster D-57 front of stage with Hancock's Rockit group and exciting to feel the ferment of the time. Bill Laswell's involvement with the improvised music scene (Zorn, Kondo, Henry Kaiser) linking up with HipHops electronic phrase of man-machine experimentalism and the back story of electronic jazz futurism.

One of the key artifacts of the era, rarely acknowledged, is John Zorn's 1983 double album *Locus Solus*, one side of which featured Zorn and Mark E. Miller improvising with the late, great but all too often forgotten turntable pioneer Whiz Kid, he who "Played That Beat Mr DJ" with MC GLDBE that same year. I feel justified in unearthing this particular gem, if only because turntablism has such a keen sense of its own history: those little semi-invisible archival blips and bleeps of scratch — what are they? Pkkt? — lifted from "Duck Rock" or whatever, drop up over and over, like magic words that accumulate layers of temporal resonance with its own utterance.

Locus Solus struggled (not altogether successfully, since Whiz Kid came over as somewhat nonplussed) with the practicality of sustaining turntable manipulation in an improvised setting. That seems identical to the fundamental

idea emerging on DJ Dek's Ancient Terraces and now Rob Swift's *The Ablist*. "I think it's phat," Swift says on "Two Turntables And A Keyboard," "because for the first time you have turntables accompanying a keyboard player." Despite Swift's disavowal of the dancer, his album is more party friendly than Zorn's ever was, though the lurching forward motion of "Fusion Beats," electric piano and turntable like aliens from different planets conversing through the aid of a dictionary, shares in common a certain rhythmic distress.

As Peter Shapiro has pointed out, the turntable may be an encyclopedia for vinyl montage in real-time, but as a sound source it comes a poor third to banjos, bagpipes and other technologies of notorious tonal intractability. This may be a question of youthfulness, development-wise. You don't play the solo bango to sound like Albert Ayler, even if you're Derek Bailey; you use it as a rhythmic mechano-drum for maximum impact, combine it with sympathetic voices such as the mandolin, then call it bluegrass or some such.

Similarly, a stylus burrowing into a record's groove, arm going back, forth at large limb speed (rather than small digit [phat pants?], pushes towards a certain vocabulary. I'm not convinced that the musicians on *The Ablist* have found that vocabulary as yet, though everybody's looking for it with sincere dedication. "All That Scratching Is Making Me Rich" is a bold attempt at getting ready to rumble, but the guitar and horns don't exactly float like butterflies, let alone stang like bees.

One of the interesting aspects of *Locus Solus* was Zorn's squawking game calls, which sounded identical in texture and attack to the duck decays, lung implosions and penguin burials of turntablism. Rob Swift as Orientalist, cutting up koto on "This Is Our Day," or dragging noise and rhythmic dysfunction out of beats and piano on "Something Different" work better than his jazz outlets, though I wouldn't diss or dismiss the ambition of these small group jam sessions. Hindsight tells us that Cubop suffered from similar breathing troubles and even Charlie Parker couldn't get loose with Machito.

Turntable philosophy is fascinating for its instinctual gravitation towards battle and the legacy of the cutting contest. One of the best tracks on *The Ablist* is "What Would You Do?" a goofy take on Wu-Tang spookosophies, the turntable scratches explicitly connected to the bone crunches of Shaw Brothers-era kung fu. Hands of stone, elbows of rubber, it's war out there.

DAVID TOOP

reformed Adro got off to an indifferent start with *Waker! The Desert* and *Tropical Heat*, as Gotsching and co struggled to catch up with the times (the clumsy use of samplers was particularly apparent), but now, finally, it looks like he's got there.

Don't be put off by the crap titles. *Adro* and Sauce Holobase, recorded live in Japan and Holland in 1997, feature longtime chorals Lutz Ulbrich on guitar/keyboards and Harold Grosbeck on drums. But it's new boy Steve Bales on samplers who has surely helped the group bridge the gap between the 70s and 90s. Though both albums share the same three track lists (*Adro* has an extra track), they sound quite different, due in part to the semi-improvisational nature of *Adro* live, as well as an eight-month gap between concerts.

Adro is the better of the two. Kicking off with Gotsching's trademark echo-guitar rhythm, "Echo Waves" builds with a gradual layering of sequencers, drums and keyboards until the whole thrum, swinging melange reaches the apex where — if you know *Adro* — the addition of Gotsching's freestyle guitar is wonderfully inevitable. The version on *Sauce Holobase* is longer, more freemson, less intense. But both albums' versions of "Twelve Samples" definitely improve on the original (from *Waker! The Desert*), even if the man sample is somewhat hackneyed. The relatively short *Adro*-only track, "Embrace", is more in the style of the *Vegan* era. Composed by Grosbeck, it is dominated by Gotsching's rambling, almost calypso guitar. "Hemmed Lactic Ruckus" closes both CDs and it's also reminiscent of the *Adro* of 20 years ago, with Gotsching's spangly guitar given full rein.

We're not talking groundbreaking; just the sound of a group back on form, enjoying themselves — *Adro* always could cut it free — and remembering why they wanted to play music in the first place.

DAVID HUOT

David Behrman Wave Train

ALBA PRODUCTIONS ALBA 0094 CD

The geographical and musical variety of the Alja Harghen label never ceases to amaze, as it uncovers the more hidden avenues of the avant garde. *Wave Train* showcases the various early activities of American composer David Behrman and his close associates. It opens with a unique transatlantic meeting between David Tudor (piano) and Christoph Casken (percussion); two important figures who at this time were both poised to create cultural upheaval in their own respective camps in the 60s and beyond. This recording is from 1959, made shortly after (and inspired by) the Darmstadt course taught by Schoenberg, and is a remarkably well preserved. But the rest of the disc is strictly US inspired, including a cold and cheerless collage of environmental activity and electronics that originally accompanied a film

patterns of notes that spin and collide in a hoistily half-dreamt light. *Asunder* stakes out further new territory ripe for exploration, combining rusty feedback squeals. (Sometimes sounding like Evan Parker's quieter soprano work) with random, howling bottom end throbs. Its sounds conjure endless fatland vistas. Yet two minutes later he employs the music of air: leaving you with the claustrophobic feeling of being locked in a small room. But no need to fear. Asunder's rooms have so many doors with a different option behind every one. The question is, which one will he go through next?

DAVID KEENAN

Ashra

@jefara

THINK PROGRESSIVE FPCD180702 CD

Ashra

Sauce Holobase

SEE POME PROCESSION

With most Krautrock, retro talk focused on the likes of Niels and Cluster, not to mention less deserving souls: it's about time Manuel Gotsching got his due. Main man of Ash Ra Tempel from 1970-76 and *Adro* from then onwards, he is a crucial figure in the Krautrock canon. Although mainly revered for his

distinctive, flowing guitar sound, he was also a leading exponent of fledgling electronics, combining the two intelligently and sympathetically. When the happy-go-lucky era of the Cosmic Jokers/Oer some implicated, Gotsching joined the likes of Tangerine Dream and Gong on Virgin and released a series of exquisitely crafted albums as *Ashra*, culminating in *E2-64*. Recorded in 1981, it was released under his own name on a small German label three years later. Bizarrely, it became the inspiration for a huge summer dance hit by Smau Latino at the end of the decade, effectively kickstarting a career which had been on hold for much of the 80s. The

by Flux artist Robert Watts (it would probably work better with the vocals).

The main revelations come via three pieces of live electronics from Behrman's *Sonic Arts Union* period in the mid-60s. The first, *Wave Train*, is a harmonious battle between two contact-mixed piano hammers, played by Behrman and his SAU partner Gordon Mumma, in which the microphone gain is raved just enough to cause both feedback and sympathetic resonance within the piano frame. *Synthes With Circuits* by the same duo is another piano and electronics piece, only more granular, with filtered sounds, abrupt changes and dense tonal colour. The third SAU work is *Runthrough*, an improvisation performed by the full SAU line-up of Robert Ashley, Allen Lucier, Mumma and Behrman on home made synths and electronics. The result is a forest of twittering electronic calls. The original SAU LP from 1969 stated that "no special skills or training are helpful, so whatever music can emerge from the equipment is as available to non-musicians as to musicians." I'm not so sure. Even with these indeterminate works (as with Tudor's work with Cage), you always have to return to the formative edition for the definitive recording took no further.

CLIVE GERRARD

City Boy Players

Niko Marks & City Boy Players
Featuring Mr Eddie Fowlkes
SWEETWOOD 559215 (CD)

Maybe it's just the African masks that adorn the cover, but this album seems like an attempt to articulate the future-primitive impulse that has run through Detroit's music ever since George Clinton rechristened Marcus Garvey's Black Star Liner the Mothership. Where most Detroit Techno rejects any sense of tradition out of hand, City Boy Players aim for Dr Frankenstein's mad scientist synthesis of roots (the funk, secular gospel) and futuristic (synth) scuzzgans and drum machines.

Perhaps addressing Techno's commercial failure in its home market, Niko Marks and Eddie Fowlkes' Fowlkes more or less ditch the

any sound paintings in favour of blue notes acuity and vocal scabbles that border on becoming real songs. There are samples of Sweet Seed's *Don't Bother Me*, African percussion and jazz licks among the vocoderd shrieks of the ensembles. "You want to achieve that taste in love objects, a chemistry/biology major who could have been an astrophysicist, and seemingly the entire American women's professional basketball league."

However, most of the album is not quite fully realised. For one, they rely too heavily on half good, half lame love songs; in addition, the musical ideas aren't connected to the words, a bit as if a sketch attempt to map a new direction. It's not a bad start.

PETER SHAFER

Curd Duca

Elevator 2
MILL PLATEAU 5211 (CD)

Curd Duca divides his time between Vienna and Miami, where he makes Easy Listening for films and videos. He's responsible for a few CD series of "psychonautical/relaxer music", as he calls it, and an album of switched-on Wagner.

Thankfully, Curd Duca is not interested in cheese. His excursions are not motivated by a dreary bad-to-good aesthetic, or an ear for dubious humour. In fact, his repackagings are oddly touching. Using his sampler he works with fragments of tracks, extracting ghostly mileage from loops. Some of the 32 tracks melt into abstraction. Others jolt and judder to a halt after a few seconds — only a few tracks last longer than a couple of a minutes anyway.

Curd Duca has composed a feeling of getting it right in his music to getting the perfect water temperature in a bath. What makes his music more interesting than used bathwater is his knack for prepping the paganism of a melody. Removed from the original surrounding god, these fragments do an infinitely more powerful job. Curd Duca doesn't attempt to uplift and parody these styles; he retains an affection for the sentiment the original tunes set out so thoroughly to destroy. While the music

remains parasitic, never achieving the remote beauty of Carl Sagan's work, Curd Duca's enigmatic mantras, complete with scorching wild sounds, are hauntingly throwaway.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Electro-Pulus

6 On 7 Special Operators
INPUT 1+2 1 (CD)

Lured to New York from Japan by the new wave scene and the artistic legacy of Andy Warhol, Aoki Mokuno gradually worked his way into the action with his electronic rock collective, Electro-Pulus. Having supported the likes of Alan Licht and one-time Jark and present Bad Seed Jim Solvunos, the Electro-Pulus (Mokuno and assorted cohorts) have become regulars at 4+ nights: a series of experimental musical performances curated by the INPUT 1+2 label.

It's none too instructive trying to place the album's loose structures in any specific context — better to digest them face value. The opening track, "15th Block & Pigeon", is proto-soul dissonance reminiscent of Pere Ubu. But if it's well of blunt guitar fuzz virtually sells the album's tone, it's only as a prelude to a range of styles. "—" sounds like Stereolab employing cut-ups, while the improvised bliss rock of "AI" is punctuated with shrill electronic motifs and smothered with breathless, orgasmic screeching. By far the most engaging track is "Black Lines Across", a yelping cacophony of Crass, early Fall and Silt Cell. The synthetic piano arpeggio attached as a coda is a mysteriously touch, a few moments of light relief acting as an escape route from the self indulgence. Where they go from here is an intriguing question.

VELIMIR PAVLEVIC

Faust

Runvinnado
KARASOUND NUMBER 60

30 years on and Faust are still as angry as hell. This is the album they've been threatening to make since they reformed at

the beginning of the 90s. Which is not to say that *You Know Nostradamus* and so on were bad records, but *Runvinnado* gets superlatively and shows a group totally in control.

Faust's split in the mid-'70s was apparently due to the increasing demands from Virgin and manager Uwe Nethebeck for a fully musical direction. Finally running their own label, Klangbad, has increased their self-belief. The end of the 90s sees Faust in fine fettle.

Joan Heide-Peters's departure in 1997 leaves Zappi Diermaier and Hans Joachim Immler as the only founding members, but they are ably supported by Ulrike Helmholz, Stephen Wray Lobell, Lars Paakkari and Michael Stoll. Yes, their sound could be described as 'retro', but in a very positive sense.

Runvinnado is Italian for 'growing faster, giving life, renewing'. The cover shows a barren scorched-red landscape, the trees naked apart from a few new shoots. The record spent around this album likewise was a process of deconstructing and giving new life. Sessions and compositions were constantly reworked until the album as a whole became one sound, one statement, scorched, scorching.

"En Neuer Tag" sets the scene with its bass-heavy bedrock groove and distorted overlay, before switching to the merry-go-round simplicity of "Carousal" (it's actually sounds like La Düsseldorf) and then back into the thunderous "Wir Brauchen Dich #6" ("We Need You 7"). This is what is great about Faust — the way they effortlessly shift from one idea to a totally different one and back again, throwing caution to the wind. In lesser hands, the threat would be lost, the spell broken, but Faust keep the sound intact and smirking. The anger is mostly in the sound rather than anything more explicit. "Take Care", reminiscent of early Neu! or D.A., seethes with it, "Lern' Tokyo" doesn't make you want to live there, but "Apokalypse" is ironically less violent than it sounds.

Somewhere between a chaotic and modern structured and abstract, serious and frivolous, Faust plough their own furrow and don't give a damn. *Runvinnado* ultimately is the sound of mastery.

DAVID ELIOTT

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The Nihilist Spasm Band & Guests

No Music Festival 98

ENHARTER KUNST RECORDINGS EKI 036-0002

In 1965 Bob Dylan wasn't the only folk blues enthusiast investigating the properties of tape megaphones and electricity. Back in Canada, the land from where Dylan's pals The Hawks had fled, eight wise-asses who probably couldn't afford the train fare to Newport were blowing up a smaller, though just as historic, storm. Every Monday night, their local vibrated to the sound of their mutant kazoo orchestra, which they had recently augmented with homemade megaphones (those damn kazoes kept drowning out the vocals), klaxon horns, found drums and "electronic amplifiers". The Nihilist Spasm Band, as they had

dubbed themselves, were content to cede the folk rock realm to Dylan. They would happily settle for the crown of free folk noise. None of them could have guessed they'd have to wait 30 years to claim it.

Fast forward to last year's No Music festival, a Nihilist Spasm Band celebration in London, Ontario. With such noise luminaries as Thurston Moore, Alan Licht, Hal Rammell and members of the Japanese group Hikoaidan serving as courtiers at their coronation, the intransigent uncrowned kings of North American improv noise must have felt vindicated for all the years they'd spent hanging through the hard times. Over the weekend, all the big noises played inspiring solo sets, one-off tag matches and mass ensemble afterhours jams, before The Nihilists themselves closed the festival, with several of their spiritual children at their side. And this gorgeous six CD set documents every last ecstatic gig.

So where did they come from and how do they fit in today's underground firmament? Initially inspired by jug bands and New Orleans street jazz orchestras, their love of improvisation drew them towards the ecstatic jazz of Albert Ayler and Cecil Taylor. A desire to create an authentic new folk form coming out of the age they were living in prompted them to invent their own sound and noise generators. But they were not above incorporating rocking feedback guitar, even if it meant buying "real" instruments. Nurse With Wound's Steven Stapleton, inevitably, picked up one of their early, rare recordings. When he released *2x=one* on his United Dancie label in 1985, he made a whole new underground aware of their existence. Thurston Moore has been another longtime champion, as has the Japanese label Alchemy, which has disseminated any number of NSB records around the world. With the rise of like-minded performance

improv outfits like The No Neck Blues Band, whose freeform freekicks are more joyous than po-faced, after 30 plus years, The Nihilist Spasm Band no longer need to feel they're playing into a void.

Despite the advance buzz surrounding the set's afterhours jams, for me, the real meat is found in the solo sections. Alan Licht plays "Betty Ford," as a sequel to his "Betty Page" — can the cracks, Light, you're killing us — on tabletop guitar and screwdriver. It cuts as deep as it gets frantic, and though it seems he only has to belch these days to be hailed for his new "minimal" classic, his No Music contribution just sounds like great rock noise to me. Thurston's piece is huge and pumped full of rattled ecstasies, and when Hikoaidan's Japo Hiroshige joins him, it looks like The Nihilists are really going to be up against it. Japo's own set, accompanied by his wife Junko on vocals, is prefaced by a sweetly sincere monologue in broken English detailing his enthusiastic belief in free noise, which makes the snail-sneering shrieks that erupt seconds later all the more absurdly pleasing.

Not that it was their intention anyway, but in the event none of these newer noise deviants succeed in upstaging The Nihilist Spasm Band at their own party. In their time-honoured fashion, "vocalist" Bill Exley opens with a short prose reading, with the massed orchestra bowing and humming beneath him, slowly intensifying the murmur into the clamour that finally overwhelms his deranged rants. Neither the mass thrub of AMH, nor the splintered, responsive play offs of much free jazz, The NSB have evolved their own highly individual improv style. There's a spiky, circular exchange of fluids, which vacillates between directed coherence and the gleeful anarchy of kids trashing a toy store.

DAVID KESMAN

Terry Fox

Atar3200

EDITIONS 5 PRES/PLATE FLUXUS PLOD CD

The American ex-pat Terry Fox (resident in Europe for several decades) is probably unfamiliar to even ardent searchers after Minimalist obscurity. He's far better known in the art world, thanks to his involvement in cathartic performance art alongside Joseph Beuys, and a long-term interest in site-specific installations. Much of his work deals with the specificity of space, drawing extensively on the geometry of the labyrinth in Charles Caudwell's *A Sculptor's* in Paris saw him open fire hydrants, letting water run through the streets to augment the cobblestone textures. His very occasional recordings document a marked preference for sound art (the organisation of sound in space) over music (sound in time). The excellent but out of print CD *Beethoven's Ninth* includes the very site-specific sounds of an army helicopter paratrooping the Berlioz Wied (near Paris) Berlioz studio in 1980) and the bowing of a single

"live" (pvi) wire stretched ten metres across his studio. To Fox, the wire is a sculpture rather than an instrument, and the sound it makes is that of the room (acting as a giant resonator) and not just the wire. He's far from alone in his enthusiasm for long strings, other artists embrace, Paul Panhagen, Allen Lucier and Ellen Fullman, are all better known in the music world.

Hopefully, *Atar3200* will gain recognition for Fox's sound inside the gallery circuit. Four of the six recordings on this collection employ the piano wires. On "Suono interno" the wires stretch 150 feet across an abandoned church (with a reverberation period that turns the building into a giant pulsing heart), while "Ritornello" allows three celists to improvise overtones and harmonics over the taut, single note drone. If other sounds electronic, but the only electrical device present is the microphone. "Berlin Atac Wiro Bausung" has the same sort of bounding, rumbling quality as the music of Arnold Dreybach, while "Berlin Atac Wiro Bausung" could be the shimmering surface of a lake of mercury.

The other two pieces feature bowed metal bowls and an aluminum ring bowl mowed made a metal culvert, with "Instruments" including a metal cheese cover and singing saw. "Culvert" is one of the most alien sounding recordings here, its high pitched warbling coming on like an extra-terrestrial choir. As with many similar acoustic explorations, the sheer strangeness of Fox's sounds transfigures their source environment completely and the recordings make clear the rich, beautiful texture of his work.

BRIAN DUGAN

Fred Frith Guitar Quartet

Up Beat

AMBIANCES PRODUCTIONS AMBIS CD

It's been rumored that Fred Frith's life mission is to obtain and mutate the role of the electric guitar in music. His work has most the broadest expansion of avant rock, and since the 70s he's been moving further away from a rock sensibility. But if his Guitar Quartet is at a

remove from rock tradition, there's no sign of weakness. It fits with an increasing interest in relatively formal composition.

His quartet is successor to a late 70s venture for Guitar Quartet. It took seven years for the first CD to appear, on a Quebec-based label that more usually specialises in electroacoustic music and industrial slanted sound poetry. Coming two years after *Ayaya Movers*, Up Beat could well represent a quickening in Frith's step. But there is an admirable roving here. Frith is waving all his great strengths to say, and Up Beat certainly says a hell of a lot. As an album, his colleagues are Rene Lussier, Nick Delovinsky and Mark Stewart, and this is a collection of live improvisations from their 1997 European tour.

Sources are hard to pin down, as you'd expect with this inherently unpredictable musician, but a lot of the subversion is directed at Country & Western. Mark Stewart's solo "Speedy Fivity" has a Country feel which becomes really noisy on "Red Rag", a carry melody set against a gutsy, blurred backdrop. Faced with increasing

discordant rhythmic disruption and feedback, the melody struggles on — a triumph of musical comedy. "Sexy Slinky" is dark and industrial, while "Spitty Boy" and "Out To Bomb Fresh Kings" are brief nose thrives. Ambient sound textures are pervasive. Fifth members he's a gentle player, not the guitar abuser of legends, but both sides of his myth are represented here. The accompanying variety make this one of his most compelling projects.

ANDY HAMILTON

Future Pilot AKA

Future Pilot AKA Vs A Galaxy Of Sound

SULPHUR SUL001 2XCD

Mount Vernon Arts Lab

Curm'Y Twonle

VIA SATELLITE VSAT7525 CD

Contrary to the established mockery of miscombined future scenarios, the end of the millennium seems to have released a postmodern frenzy of remodeling often quaint golden-age settings to fit the imminent future they once envisaged. So Space 1999 actually got it right when it predicted interplanetary transport interns would look like a 70s hair salon. And high-refined sleek suits, oversized digital display watches, the millennium come even, all echo the forms and fashions of fictional futures past. In keeping with this tendency is the emergence of an avant-electronica which uses vintage analogue tools and cheap digital technology to sculpt its soundscapes. In fact, the rehabilitation of antique electronic noises has already been well established by artists such as Stereolab and Add N To (X), but both Future Pilot AKA and Mount Vernon Arts Lab indicate a shift towards a kind of millennial DIY folk. That these auteurs work with a variety of collaborators, particularly Future Pilot AKA, shouldn't detract from the singularity of their respective visions.

Suzhi K Dade's Future Pilot project involves a wide variety of collaborators, from Camerashop and The Pastels to Kim Fowley, Brix Smith and Alan Vega. The sound is largely soft and beat-based, but with some interesting detours: the Fowley track is equal parts John Barry and The K.U. Wire contributor David Keenan crops up as one half of Sumckerton with an acoustic, pipe-like, marimba, and Bill Wells's quartet of variations on an instrumental theme serve as punctuation points throughout. But upon this diverse collection of collaborators, Future Pilot imposes his own clear identity with the recurring motifs he plants throughout the album and the pleasantly loose, spontaneous feel he engenders in his contributors.

The solo odyssey of Dade's latest Glaswegian Drew Mulholland, Mount Vernon Arts Lab's Gummy Twonle is more strictly focused on sound treatments as opposed to structured rhythms. "William Green" maintains an ominous machine pulse around which dirt electronic fluttering noises, the collaboration

with Project DARK, "Cabaret Volt Age", sets tiny explosions and bass drones against distorted white noise, and "Superstition", with EAR's Sonic Boom, tapers off into space rock ambience. Very nice, very thin.

TOP THREE

Horn, Kendig & Dickey

Schwerdrücker

UJO LAB C0051 CD

Maybe it was Sonic Youth, maybe it was John Cale, maybe it was Rolf Harris, but extreme musics of the 50s and 60s — Sun Ra, Coltrane electronics, musique concrète, free improv — are now out of the bag and being used by noise-makers everywhere. If I say that Horn, Kendig & Dickey play free rock soundscapes with chainsaw synths and Ra-like colorations, you shouldn't hold that against them. In fact, in an area strewn with slack imitation and celebrity skimming, this trio is a genuine find. The music, actually sound good!

The coherence of their playing impacts physically, musical phrases measured by the emotive body. There's none of the 'avant à la cool', post-Zorn deconstruction that makes acts like Ground Zero and Cawacronna pulverize everything into meaningless shivers. The social satanism is well measured too. "I'm wearing an apron and I'm on a teenage cost containment program."

It's probably Gary Kendig's beautiful free jazz drums that allow all this to happen. There's also some slow sifting from an electric bass that aims straight at the brain. Loopy snare noodles make electro meat connections. On the ten minute title track, Hugh Dickey's electric guitar soars to the ecstatic heights rock lore says died with Duane Allman and Jim Hendrix.

BRIAN WATSON

Susie Ibarra & Assif Tshahr

Home Cookin'

HAPPSCOTCH RECORDS H001 CD

Pericardium's Susie Ibarra's work went down a storm at Future Pilot's David's Ware Quartet gig in London, where she reprised the fortuitously intelligent playing of her studio sessions with the group. Sadly, it was apparently Ibarra's last performance with the group. The CD has her dueting with saxophonist Assif Tshahr. Nine tracks recorded live at the Knitting Factory are interspersed with eight 'driven songs' — miniatures recorded in their living room with diverse unusual instruments.

Ibarra is a wonderfully open drummer, with a light, melodic style. She makes sparing use of the snare, preferring to fashion elaborate skirts of sound with cymbals and toms. She also goes beyond the scope of the conventional drum kit, making striking use of other percussive devices. Tracks such as "Happy Delusion" and "Machuga Loco" show her working to good effect with light repeated patterns.

Tshahr plays rough edged, crying tenor. At

times he has a slightly enervated style, but on pieces like "Liquid Time" he throws himself pell mell into high paced rhythmic dialogue with Ibarra. On "Ali Dawn", by contrast, he brings a stinging sense of uncertainty to his playing. His imagination roams wide, though the music ultimately remains locked in fairly unsurprising free jazz forms of expression. It was obviously a fine show that night, but whether all the strengths of the performance have survived the transition to CD format's unclear.

WILL MONTGOMERY

Jeep Beat Collective

Technica Chansaw Massacre

B01M-EP-40P 107-60305 2XCD 2XLP

Unlike many of his turntable brethren, Jeep Beat Collective's Dave Davies isn't interested in defending the turntable's status as a musical instrument, or in tearing apart syntax with lightning speed juxtapositions and improbably named scratches. Instead, he slows down the pace of the cuts, breaks out some party tricks and packs his collages full of hooks and mnemonic devices.

Technica Chansaw Massacre is an American retrospective of the Creative-based Jeep Beat Collective's output, assembled by David Paul's starting Bomb Hip-Hop label. Those in the know will probably already own last year's domestically released Repossessed (Wildstyle) compilation, which contains 11 of the tracks included here, but Technica initiates are advised to start with this eminently approachable collection.

Schlewing the rocket science of obscurantist techniques like beef jaggling, uttempo tracks like "Stop Ya Skramers" "The Tempo Hater" and "B Boys Breakdance Forever" use an array of scribbles and fares to boost momentum rather than to create a flurry of abstraction. All three parts of the landmark "The Bomb Drops" (included on Return Of The DJ Volume 7) are here, and they live up to their title with unrelenting forward motion and explosive dynamics.

While these vinyl collages may be the least scientific and most digestible examples of turnbaiting, they are also among the most emotionally effective: be it the ghost of Chuck D emerging from the somber atmosphere of "Superhero" to exclaim "Plot of our heroes don't appear on no stamps", there's also the moodily low song to Hiship, "Hip-Hop Hater" and the anti-robot lecture, "The Sporeoscope Syndrome". The ten minute megamix that closes the album, "Attack Of The Wistyley Baitball", veeds Dave's two concerns and manages to move both minds and bodies.

PETER SHAPIRO

Joi

One And One Is One

IGN. WORLD 00774 CD

A comedy act called the iPod used to do a set about the club scene's fascination with the

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TRANS AM - FUTURE WORLD

(MUSICAL JOURNAL)

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(5/7)

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soundcheck

mysterious East. A shaky slide of the Taj Mahal, a Techno trums, and a deep and mournful voice intoning, "Indonin, land of a thousand gods, Krishna, Vishnu, and the other ones." As on the other hand, are the real thing. Sort of. The two Bengali brothers, Farook and Hanson Shamsler, are from London's mysterious East End. They run a Mela night at the 12 club in Farringdon. Their label calls them the "Original Asian Breakfast Fusionsists" which sounds better than "Arm-Waving Dance FOLK With Star Samples" but maybe amounts to the same thing.

One And One Is One is a big wet smoochy loss of a debut album. It won't actually do you any harm, but it isn't an idea in its glitter-dusted head. The titles give the game away: "Asian Vibes" (the single), "Everybody Say Yeah" and, erm, "Indo." The mood is endlessly celebratory, sleekly as she goes cap'n at 120 bpm, and any musical interest comes from Sutisheh Rahman's vaguely ecstatic vocals. The Indian samples are chucked in for a perfunctory dash of color. Spring Heel Jack contribute a remix of "ESI-541," which has a lighter touch and is a shade more thoughtful. After that it's back to the rave, Dave.

I saw Joe about a year ago, waving their arms and dancing round the decks. They were likeable and a good laugh. Party on, Asian dudes, but alas, this album sucketh.

CLIVE BELL

Joe Maneri

Tenderly

HATOLOGY 525 CD

Now 72, the saxophone and clarinet player Joe Maneri was working in obscurity until he formed a group with his son, violinist Pat. Since then he has been catching up fast. Following his belated, but critically well-received debut on Leo in 1993, he has released seven recordings, plus a disc of demos from 1963 and 1964.

The present quartet has evidently been chosen with care. Maneri junior continues his melodic exploration on electric sax string with Ed Schuller on bass and Randy Peterson on drums. Peterson is better known for more mainstream jazz, but plays with a lot

of freedom here. Schuller's style fits with the gently honed character of most of this music. In a way, Joe Maneri is enjoying a debt, because it was Gunther Schuller, the bassist's father and highly regarded Third Stream composer, who hired Maneri to teach at the New England Conservatory in 1970. The two Maneris generally take the lead, with bass and drums responding.

Jazz standards are a significant part of Joe Maneri's repertoire. "Tenderly" appeared on *In Full Cry*, and here it's the title track, improvisations seem based around the theme more than the chords. But now I find myself less convinced. As the *Penguin Guide To Jazz* put it, Joe Maneri's sound is "utterly unique and distinctive, but damagingly hard to categorise." Comparisons with Ornette Coleman aren't useful. Maneri's microtonal theory places his music at many removes from the blues. Microtonality seems like a formalisation of the pitch-bending essential to jazz improvisation, despite Pat Maneri's claim that this is "a jazz band, not a microtonal ensemble." Ornette's effortless lyricism took a while to penetrate many ears. But Maneri's music remains too often dog-eared — an uncharitable description would be "breezy." A unique soundworld, but perhaps less satisfying as it gets more familiar.

ANDY HAMILTON

Merzbow & Genesis P-Orridge

A Perfect Pain

COLD SPAIN CS923 CD

The ghosts have taken over the machine. They've always been in there, burrowing away, establishing control from within. Technological breakthroughs control their existence through a plethora of phantom voices, spirit photographs and the haunting of reanimated corpses. The true origins of industrial music are to be found in the soundworld which Tobe Katoe recorded with Wayne Bell for his 1974 draw-in-class, *The Texas Chomaw*. Missouri, which dealt with issues of surplus flesh and the mechanics of the slaughterhouse at a time when economies in the Northern Hemisphere were rapidly losing

their manufacturing base. You can hear it in the failing tape loops and heavy reverb Hooper and Bell wished together to cover up those long terrible gaps in the action.

It's hard not to think of such moments while listening to the collaboration between extreme noise act Merzbow and media terrorist Genesis P-Orridge, especially when they opening cut, "A Perfect Restraint," climaxes with the same equivalent of pegs being butchered over relentless sated rhythms before breaking away into white noise and silence.

Caught by the demands of tradition and evolution, *A Perfect Pain* is pure data trash of the highest quality. Those who come to it without expecting anything new won't be disappointed. Ghosts, like meat, are mere by-products of the living process. Denied sovereignty, they remain unchanged, incapable of further transformation. "Flowering Pain Gave Space" allows the deluge of feedback which Merzbow has slowly built up around Genesis's voice to go away to the oscillating, ring-modulated madness of "Source Are Rises", a monstrous whirling 25 minute grind through such familiar themes as holocaust, corruption and slavery. P-Orridge's texts remain as opaque as ever, and his delivery hasn't developed much over the years, but then it's always been Gen's vaulting sense of ambition rather than his actual abilities that have made him what he is today. "There is no beauty here/no higher purpose than limitless degrading and mutation," he observes on "All Beauty Is Our Enemy." Presence has always been a transcendent issue in Gen's art. Perhaps that is why he has taken the unprecedented step of declaring himself to be England's last true queen. The gesture is as perfect as it is daring. Our sovereign is dead. Long live her majesty.

KEN HOLLINGS

Muzsikás

The Bartók Album

HARMONIA MUNDI CD 199 CD

While Schoenberg was inventing serialism and Steuermann constructing neo-classical models, Bela Bartók (1881-1945) was out collecting and editing the myriad folk songs of his native

Hungary. He was also something of an expert on Romanian and Slovak folk music, but that's another story. "The study of the peasant music," he said, "was for me of decisive importance, for the reason that it revealed to me the possibility of a total emancipation from the hegemony of the major-minor system." In these Magyar songs he found melodies based on ancient Greek modes that would eventually be assimilated into his own modernist sensibility, influencing great works like his piano concertos and later string quartets. Other notable Hungarians, Zoltan Kodaly and Miklos Rozsa, were similarly influenced. Strange, perhaps, that the folk inspired music of these composers links my imagination with its spiky rhythmic energy and dark lyricism, whereas the folk music itself leaves me mostly unmoved.

The Bartók Album, a celebration by folk group Muzsikás of Bartók's affinity for Hungarian folk music, offers 22 pieces of which sadly only three are by Bartók himself. These are violin duos, featuring ace classical (and occasional improv) fiddler Alexander Balanescu, and although very brief, they contain sufficient harmonic grip to put nearly anything else here in the shade. Violetta Martu-Capella's couple of pages of gipsy-style performances are the other high points on a disc that is otherwise much too politely folk oriented to prepare newcomers for the complex demands and pleasures of Bartók's often desiccated soundworld.

CHRIS BLACKFORD

Pauline Oliveros/Peer Bode/Andrew Deutsch

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Can

Can Box: Live 1971-77

SPOON ASPOONH1 24CD

Can concerts were the stuff of legend: jugglers, acrobats, fire-eaters, a 20-minute drum solo in a power cut, Malcolm Mooney screaming "Lustlers downstars!" for more than an hour (including the intermission), and a knife-wielding fan who jumped onstage demanding a third encore (he got it), were just some of the attractions. But what made every concert a one-off was their desire to improvise rather than play their latest album — itself the result of hours of improvisations.

Apparently every Can concert was recorded (though often only on cassette). So how come a live album has been so long in coming? Ten years ago, Iman Schmidt, cited the enormous amount of time it would take to get through all the tapes. Besides, he thought, they'd missed the right moment. Well, Spoon's 30th birthday — surely 31 now? — is apparently occasion enough. Longtime friend Andy Hall cut the cassette pie down to manageable proportions, then Schmidt and Michael Karoli made the final edits. The resulting CD is item one in the much touted *Can Box* — the other items being the disappointing Can book (see *The Wire* 1B1) and a Can video featuring live and documentary footage.

What we get is a couple of hours of music recorded at various concerts in Germany and the UK in 1972, 75 and 77, featuring the core foursome plus Domo Suzuki on the early stuff (So where's the 1971 material promised by the title? Spoon's presentation is as infuriatingly sloppy as ever.)

Some of the material here has long been available on bootlegs, but the majority is previously unreleased in any form. Three and a half of the nine tracks are improvisations, the others being loose renditions of recorded work. The sound quality is variable but mostly surprisingly good considering the cassette sources.

The immediate point of interest is the Domo Suzuki material on the second disc. There are just two tracks — both from 72 — but at over 50 minutes you can't quibble. "Spoon" is just about recognisable, trading its original sublime conciseness for something wilder and stranger, but still with a groove to die for. It was taken from a live concert in Cologne in front of 10,000 people, which was filmed by Peter Przygodda and turns up on the Can video "Colchester Finale", on the other hand, takes forever to get going, but after 20 minutes it suddenly becomes "Hallelujah" and all is well. This is Can par excellence: Holger Czukay's brooding bass, Jaki Lieberich's hypnotic, cyclical drumming, Karoli understated on guitar, Schmidt's swirling, dervish or gan and Suzuki's gorgeous gibberish on top.

Gigs from 1975 — Can's "mid-pend" — showcase a liberated "Dozy Dozy" with Karoli now handling the (still fairly minimal) vocals, there is also a controlled yet re-roaring "Worm Equinox", featuring some great interplay between Lieberich and Schmidt, plus two improvised workouts, the keyboard-heavy "Jym" and "Kata Kong". An intriguing bonus is an almost subtle, Karoli-sung version of "Yoo Doo Right", from Croydon of all places. He's good, but he's not Malcolm Mooney. The remaining two tracks, "Fiz" and "Cascade Waltz", are both from March 1977, a few months before Can stopped playing live and about a year before they suspended operations altogether. Rosko Gee and Reelbig Kwaku Bash had joined the ranks, turning Can into something else. Czukay was playing less bass and more tapes/radio (you can just hear snatches of "Boat Woman Song" in the background of the excellent, elliptical "Fiz"). But "Cascade Waltz" is symptomatic of the new state of affairs — it is played straight, without words, without feeling.

Let's spare Can the usual fawning eulogies. Yes, they were a great group. One of the best. But they were human too, and of a time. For all the talk about how Can sound so modern, this set is 25 years old, and for the most part, sounds like it. Can are a great memory, and they're no less wonderful for that.

DAVID BLOTT

this new album. The result is mostly gorgeous, a silky confection with its heart in late 60s orchestrated American pop, with just enough edgy noises to hold onto its avant status. The artwork, too, hints at a perverse underbelly to the enterprise by drawing on codes of Japanese pop. Rabbit lovers should approach the cover with caution.

There are six O'Rourke originals here, lavishly melodic but more pieces than songs, exercises in texture and instrumentation. French horns are dovetailed with peal steel guitars, voices nuzzle trombones, steel drums shadow electric pianos. O'Rourke sings too, with a voice that rarely gets beyond pained, but here it works, a restrained focal point that drifts in and out of the foreground. The other two tracks are covers of Ivor Cutler and Burt Bacharach; names not often seen together, and their adjacency here is a telling index of O'Rourke's wry eclecticism. The Bacharach number, "Something Big", is the one time O'Rourke's vocals really can't cope, so he wisely allows backing singers Edith Frost and Freda Gertler to romp away in a damn fine pasche of The Fifth Dimension.

Bunko almost drowns in influences, both overt and inferred. Dan Dyke Parks is an obvious touchstone, from *Tom Waits* and Michael Nesmith lurk further back, feeling the albums intense in moodily, oblique Americana. There's something of Todd Rundgren in the showy accompaniment of it all, though none of Rundgren's cool leanings are permitted to intrude on the very little soundscape, and there are moments when O'Rourke flirts with boldly unfashionable reference points — I think I heard Simon and Garfunkel and The Association look out once or twice.

What O'Rourke outcits will make of this flagrantly approachable music is difficult to know. They may already be scandalised by the raw reviews it's been receiving in the mainstream press, but I doubt if it signals any sort of permanent change of direction. For all its poignant plainness, this is more of a hobbyist indulgence than anything else, a byproduct of a very smart man deciding to draw on one quality, secret corner of his record collection. I think it's by far the lowliest thing he's ever been involved with.

ANDY FREEMAN

Os Mutantes

Os Mutantes

EMI/ARTEMIS 0000001 CD

Os Mutantes

Mutantes

EMI/ARTEMIS 0000002 CD

Os Mutantes

A Divina Comédia Os Ando Meio

Donsigado

EMI/ARTEMIS 0000003 CD

In the 1960s Brazil declared war on rock 'n' roll. Any popular music betraying American or English influences — and that included the

unlovely *The Popus* release, in 1997, coupling "Amen Pop" (1967) with "Beautiful Soup" (1966) exemplifies her pioneering work in humanising electronically generated sounds. "Carner", the title track here, names the strands more dramatically than previously on record. Diversus studied, it is salutary to remember alongside Terry Riley in Robert Enk's classes at San Francisco State College during the mid-1950s. A wealth of experience has been channelled into this recording, where she collaborates with Peer Boote, whose father Harald invented the Boote Vocoder and ran the Boote Sound Company. Recordings of Harald Boote's voice have been incorporated into the enigmatic "Carner" mix.

Andrew Deutsch added his technical expertise to that realisation, and he brought memories of his grandmother's comments upon the squeakiness of violins to the delightfully squeaky "Lucille's Veil". This piece appears in two forms, one an algorithmic remix by Kevin McCoy. Important though the algorithm may have been in the process of revision, there is no trace of mathematical abstraction in the finished work. Glover's interest lies foremost with the sensual nature of sound and the audience for it. Her collected writings, published in 1982, called *Software For People*, align her work with contemporaries such as Paul De Marinis and David Behrman, whose electroacoustic

compositions shun the clinical rigidity that has often characterised European electroacoustics. Like them, Glover issues general invitations to listen, without making any concessions to cross-compatibility, with its diffuseness and demands for preflexion.

JULIAN COWLEY

Jim O'Rourke

Eureka

EMI/ARTEMIS 0000002 CD

Sleazed cookie as ever, Art noise prankster Jim O'Rourke has decided to bamboozle expectations by turning lush and accessible for

use of electric instruments — was immediately suppressed by the printer, sounding “P[B] like *Moça Popular Brasileira* (Popular Music of Brazil), an organization made up, remarkably, of listeners and musicians sworn to act as the nation’s cultural guardians. Apart from the occasional mop-topped pop look, they managed to keep the readers out. Far more problematic was how to deal with “enemies within,” like the trio of young experimental rock musicians calling themselves *Os Mutantes* (The Mutants). Formed by brothers Arnaldo and Sérgio Dias Baptista, with American-born singer Rita Lee. Os Mutantes’ amplified rock was inflammatory enough to cause a riot when they appeared in front of a hostile audience, with a song called “O Proibido Proibir” (“No Forbidding”). But it marked the moment of conception of Brazil’s tropicália movement, whose prime movers would include Caetano Veloso, Tom Zé, Gal Costa, Gilberto Gil and Rogério Duprat. But it was Os Mutantes who really ignited the military dictatorship which came to power in 1964 — incidentally, the same year, the trio released their self-titled debut LP.

More than 30 years later, the album still riles as an electric punch powerful enough to end the unworkable listening experience of the kind of exotic novelty brayed over by the incredibly strange music. Fiction instead, imagine Pierre Henry and Michel Colombier’s avant-propos masterpiece *Musée Pour Le Temps Présent* scrambled with the low choice cuts from The Beatles’ *Revolver* and The Mothers Of Invention’s *We’re Only In It For The Money*, only then will Os Mutantes’ fusion of musical madness and barbed social commentary start to make any sense.

Later the same year the trio were joined by a full-time drummer, Ronaldo Dias Leme, and his brother Claudio on electronics to record their equally jaw dropping second record, *Mutantes*. A full fanfare that would have done Cecil B De Mille proud, capped with hysterical laughter, introduces their suitably mutated Brazilian version of Don Quixote. Other rhythmic delights include the emotionally distorted “Day 315,” a tribute to their singer. “Rita Lee” (performed in an off-letter Eurovision style that beamingly follows the same route Sun Ra took with bebop), and “Campanha Naturoza” (“Night Walker”) where they push all their instruments to the limit. As the brass section reaches a crack-valved crescendo, a robotic Brazilian accent resounding deep within the moe proclaims, “It is forbidden to forbid.” Their surrealistic declaration of artistic independence eventually won over most Brazilians — except the dictators.

Os Mutantes’ third album, from 1970, pays twisted homage to Dante in the title (*Dive Comedy Or Walk Disconnected*), out the mania that infected their earlier albums is less evident. That said, the lunatic, Japin-like “My Refrigerator Doesn’t Work” and their Satanic sonnet “Miel Locura” are slight returns to form. Small wonder then that David Byrne, the late Kurt Cobain, Stereocub and Beck all willingly

let themselves be infected by Os Mutantes’ musical and political madness. Groove along to Beck’s *Mutantes*, by all means, but be sure to check out the original source now that it’s back on the streets.

EDWIN POUNCEY

Evan Parker

Monoceros
CHRONICLE 03092304 CD

As the product of a questing intelligence brought to bear upon a single musical instrument, the acoustic palette that Evan Parker has developed on soprano sax has few parallels in music. His sustained exploration of all the instrument’s possibilities is now into its third decade and shows no sign of flagging. Yet, so immediately identifiable and so widely influential has Parker’s soprano language become, people are wont to take its radical nature for granted. Which is why the release of *Monoceros* is such an unmitigated pleasure.

It enables us to look back at the development of a highly personal language — one of floating overtones, adumbrated fingerings, dizzying densities, and the trademark labyrinthine patterns of circular breathing. Losing yourself in the sheer joyous complexity of Parker’s sound is as much a spiritual experience as going long and hard at a Pollock painting. Or possibly the better analogy, as mentioned in Steve Lake’s new sleeve notes, is to the self-generated intricacies of the Mandelbrot patterns of chaos theory.

The second of Parker’s solo records, *Monoceros* was originally released on Incus in 1978. It was recorded direct to disc, a technique briefly in vogue at the time because it bypassed the hiss of analogue tape. As that also surrendered the possibility of future editing also carried some import for hardcore improvisers. But for a player like Parker, whose effect is very much in the concentrated detail of his playing, the attraction of the technique was doubtless the superior sound it ensured. For the listener as well, the will to perfection and the cohesion of the session pay great dividends. This is a great sounding and looking release too, a worthy complement to Chromscope’s previous reissue of Parker’s *Soprano Solos*.

ALAN CURRIEWS

Andrea Parkins

Slippage
KUTVING FACTORY KFR229 CD

Slippage, credited to the New York accordionist/ambulist Andrea Parkins, is an appropriate title. It is difficult to sustain listening coordinates on this terrain. The opening “Remarkable Spectacle Of A Frozen Cataract” is at one an acoustic landscape burling map and compass beneath a torrential montage of accordion, sampler, percussion and piano. “Local Cosmography” clears away some of the rubble, as

saxophonist Briggan Krauss rehearses an artless melody, culled from the Albert Ayler songbook. On also it appears, curiously frail and its line is soon severed by Anneke Paron’s accordion and Kenny Wollesen, whose approach to drumming is resident of Chris Cutler. The melody returns in still more etiolated form at the conclusion.

The title piece offers some guidance, a straightforward sax, piano, percussion. The Krauss’s playing here seems to invoke Anthony Braxton, with Parkins in line Schweizer mode. The format recurs on “Beautiful Animal.” Between the trebly, logical clarity of those pieces, however, there is a plunge into a turbid dub, which dissolves to make space for a brief piano solo, deconcertingly entitled “Hoo.” Rock rhythms form the foundation for the next two pieces. “Early TV” is framed with a Curlew-like punchiness, although midway it drifts into insectiness loaded with the rattling of sampled haw. “Lost Love” is an outing in classic Henry Cow style. Krauss repeats urgent patterns on bariitone, shadowed by Parkins’s reedy accordion, while Wollesen ignites his cyclone. Spaces open for solo improvisation. “Two Days At Once” also adopts the oppositional rock idiom, while the murky dub returns on the closing “Story Of An Eye.” The title of “Order Of Signs”, for piano alone, suggests a post-structuralist agenda underlying this calculated confusion of realms. In spite of that, Slippage offers serious shape-shifting for those occasions when let’s get lost is the order of the day.

JULIAN COWLEY

Sam Prekop

Sam Prekop

THREE JACOBY THEOLOGIST CD

The first solo recording from the singer and principal songwriter with The Sea And Cake is far more understated than previous group outings (not that his group have ever been noted for their stridency). It has a long, shimmering quality partly derived from an infusion of jazz, which shapes the mood of the album’s ten tracks. Drummer Chad Taylor and bassist Josh Abrams bring a loose fluidity to the songs. They’re joined by Archer Bryant on guitar, and Joe O’Reilly on pretty much everything else. It’s certainly no great radical departure from Sam Prekop’s day job, more of an extension of his established songwriting skills.

The quality is consistent throughout, from the quietly beguiling “Showrooms” and the quiet intensity of “The Company”, to the charmingly lay “Don’t Bother”, where Prekop sings, “A thousand dreams of nothing to do.” The songs are punctuated by instrumental tracks, such as the elegantly poised, piano led “A Cloud To The Back”, and “Smaller Rivers”, in which a single piano note breaks into the repetitive guitar refrain. At a third instrumental, “Faces And People” is more resolute of The Sea And Cake with its lush rhythmic texture and melodic counterpoint. Pianist and



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Gen the assassin

Hashishheen

The End Of Law
SUB ROSA SC154 CD

The Hashishheen were a Persian order of assassins founded in 1090 by Hassan-i Sabbah, the legendary Old Man Of The Mountains. Before an assignment, each assassin was invited into the garden of Alamut, fed mahjoun — hashish sweets — and a virgin. Apart from the virgins, perhaps, the killer brotherhood's appeal to Beat comrades William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin is becoming evident. But it goes deeper: the following morning, the assassin willingly leaves on his assignment. Having tasted paradise, he is happy in the knowledge that he is not expected to return.

Before he acquires the self-discipline to follow orders to the death, the assassin must undergo a ritual training incorporating personality

deprogramming: he is raised through several levels of reality, only for each to be stripped from beneath him one at a time. Finally understanding chaos as the one true order of the universe, he repeats the Hashishheen oath, "Nothing is true, everything is permitted."

The Old Man's legends have percolated through time, his brotherhood's cell structure and methods serving as models for murder clubs, mafias and guerrilla organizations. By extension he is the invisible thread through 1,000 years' worth of conspiracy theories. All told, his legend has been a rich source of ideas for Burroughs, the control theorist, chaos strategist and, not least, storyteller. However, his last major recycling of the legend, in his late novel, *The Western Lands*, came out as Burroughs mutated into a Rider Haggard boy's own adventure, albeit for very sick boys only. The *Western Lands* has already formed the basis of one spoken word collaboration with Bill Laswell, under the title *Seven Souls*, and it again supplies a few key texts to this Laswell-led, spoken word with soundtracks project.

Incredibly ambitious in scope, Laswell leads a motley expedition to the Rock of Alamut, pairing off musicians and readers along the way. Somewhat astonishingly, given the array of temperaments — Genesis P-Orridge, Techno Animal, Paul Schütze, Eyesless In Gaea, Nick Skopelaris, Jah Wobble, Hakim Bey, Iggy Pop, Anne Clark, Susan Dayhim, WSB, Percy Howard, Lizzy Merzario Descloux and Ratt Smith — the album hangs together musically, preserving a continental style heterogenous mix. (That's not to deny some of it is total crap.)

As befits the Burroughs-like Wild Boy information war he has fought against the mainstream media with cut-ups and tapes, Genesis P-Orridge gets to murmur the Hashishheen oath: "Nothing is true." His voice floats down like a mahjoun mist, merging with its echo

to eddy through the canyons carved by Laswell for "The Old Man Of The Mountains", while Mlendam's Percy Howard speaks the bulk text in a rather acrobatic way. Over the distance he gets to speak a lot. But you get used to him. Genesis's by turns intoxicating, sinister and vaguely comic tone, on the other hand, is sparsely yet effectively deployed throughout.

Techno Animal sketch a deadly and landscape of lost souls behind first, a WSB recording, and then Iggy Pop, on his best behavior reading "The Western Lands", albeit with preposterous pronunciation. Pop later changes partners to Paul Schütze on "A Quick Trip To Alamut"; Jah Wobble's heavily accented exotica, "The Divine Self", is a real head trip. Autonomist Hakim Bey's readings are particularly outstanding.

Yet even on the strongest readings, you can't help wondering if the texts gain anything by being read out loud. Especially as, even on a Laswell project as strong as this, his tendency towards pan-World Musical eclecticism accentuates the disc's latent Rider Haggard effect. It emerges most strongly, surprisingly, in Iranian singer Susan Dayhim's diaphanously veiled advertising-shoot music.

Regardless, as a text anthology, coordinated by Peter Lamborn Wilson, its range is tremendous. It draws Hassan-i Sabbah myths from 20 sources, including texts from the Arabic/Islamic diaspora dating back to the eighth century; plus 13th century German arcana, and Sabbah tales processed through Gysin and Burroughs, French decadence, De Wael and Rimbaud, doughty Brash traveller Freya Stark and Hakim Bey.

When the Old Man comes to weigh up Laswell's contribution, his music pales next to his ability to get so many nationalities, faiths, temperaments and political shades working on the same project. Someone gives him a UN blue helmet.

BIBA KOPF

experimental by nature, it unsurprisingly goes on to form fantastically songs of the culture of "The Shadow" and "So Stay" recess the album's balance

TOP HIDE

Jonathan Richman

It So Confused
WAPR 93624/93662 CD

The paradox of Jonathan Richman is how the transparency of his music and character causes confusion. The first Modern Lovers album set him up as the critics' cut idol, and since then he has been backing away from the kind of good press that plenty got him at. His retreat into a world of acoustic whimsy and simple songs has been described as 'childlike'. But any child laughed at ridiculed or condescended to the way Jonathan Richman has been, would burst into tears. Definitely not the crying kind. Richman is made of more resilient stuff.

His defining characteristic is an unabashed lyricism that is unafraid of ridicule. On his album's second track, "Nineteen in Naples", Richman sings, "When I was 19 I went across the pond and found myself in the dormitory" — a lyric that is at once playful and audacious. His songs draw their strength from such direct expression. That *It So Confused* contains songs such as "Love Me Like I Love" and "Hello From Cupid" attests his gentle integrity.

When he's not writing about being loveless or misunderstood — subjects in keeping with his doo-wop influences — Richman has a compelling way of reporting the passing of another little piece of humanity in plain language: storm of poetry which makes all the more moving in "Lonely Little Think Store", he sings, "And the next door neighbor who lives there now the neighborhood is down and there's garbage on the ground". His words simultaneously ring true and faintly ridiculous.

There's a certain unsettling air of expectation

here why doesn't my man find a wife? Surely the songs will open up to be knock any minute, as if Richman found himself as the Jeff Koons of post-Velvet rock 'n' roll? But the moment of untruth never arrives: leaving you feeling guilty for ever doubting him

TOP HIDE

Sainkho

Naked Spirit
AFKATA 4RMB2238 CD

The phenomenal vocal abilities of Sainkho Namtchikva have regularly been heard in the company of live improvising musicians. Naked Spirit finds the Tuvan singer in a more intimate context. The title track pairs her with American reed maestro Tjwan Galspian. The warm, vibrant sound of his spruce wood flutist makes a perfect foil for her wordless intoning.

The collaboration is regrettably brief, but what follows is just as uplifting. On "Mindlight Blue" a delicate piano accompaniment by

Roberto Caccapaglia anchors a simple tune which Sainkho nudges towards the upper limits of audible pitch. It is the gracefulness that Meredith Monk strives for in her solo ballads. Monk's ensemble would surely be delighted to have realised "True Wedding", but this is Sainkho alone and perfectly self-sufficient, using overblowing to orchestrate her voice as vigorous melody glides across insistent polyrhythms. Other musicians contribute elsewhere, adding coring and pipes, indigenous fiddle, the buzzing timbre of the plucked metal harp, and the evocative pounding of shaman's drum and tabla.

The ensemble sound reflects Sainkho's researches into the shamanic traditions of Tuva, her native land, located where Siberia meets Mongolia. But she is a creative, musician, not an archivist, and she is ready to add a judicious touch of artificial echo to enhance her stratospheric vibrations. It is still her overtone singing that overwheems, however. Listen to "Moon Trance" or "Long Way Home" for a wonderfully integrated use

of what composer David Helys has called the "reflected or prometic voice?" And listen to "From Me To You" for that unfeasible doubling of deep voice, for a long time only heard in the West through recordings of Tibetan monk chants. It is an uncertainty and strangely affecting form of ventriloquism.

JULIAN COWLEY

Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma

Sampradaya
REAL WORLD DINTS CD

Indian classical music of this calibre is a kind of Route One into the realm of the ineffable. Sampradaya is a single evening raga, a duet performance by Shiv Kumar Sharma and his son Rahul Sharma, with tabla player Shafiq Ahmed Khan. By the time we reach the final segment after 66 minutes, the harmonics and overtones are starting to spin off the walls like devils, the tabla is so fast it seems to be howling at the moon, and we're well into that land where things cannot be effied.

Ears ringing, it feels odd to pick up a pen at all. And why did *The Beach Boys' Endless Summer* keep coming to mind? Two santoor dulcimers, each with 116 strings, are hammered with light sticks held between index and middle finger. Sharma is immensely popular in India both for his classical and film music. For his first Real World recording, made in one take at Peter Gabriel's studio in Wiltshire, he chose the raga, *Janamamohini*. This set note raga is like a D major scale with missing fourth and flattened seventh. Brian Wilson used to specialise in seventh chords, so that's maybe why I detected a Beach Boys flavour. Another reason might be the zinging brightness of the colours when the santoor plays in this scale. The slow opening section contrasts the clearly hammered notes with the delicacy of the whispering tremolos, sustaining the husied note for as long as needed. Later the two players trade riffs, textures and melodies in a Technicolor display of sophisticated improvisation.

In spite of only employing six notes, the piece constantly evolves, revealing new vistas and dancing to different rhythms. Melodies

are clearly stated so that the other player can pick them up and develop them, but the duet is far from formulaic, and usually the two instruments are seamlessly intertwined. The recording, as expected from Real World, is rich and clearly lovely. Overtones and the subtle varieties of Sharma's hammering are all crystal clear. He has pioneered the use of the santoor in the Indian classical tradition — before him it was confined to regional folklores. The first time I saw him start to play it was hard to believe such an unpromising instrument could sustain interest for a 60 minute raga. But, as on this recording, that hour seemed remarkably short.

CLIVE BELL

David Shea An Eastern Western Collected Works SUB ROSA SM34 CD

"If I have to sit on one more floor cushion," Andy Warhol's business manager Cuthie Hughes once commented in acid tones of the early 70s Manhattan loft scene, "I'm going to kill someone." You can see his point. Bland complacency and earnest mediocrity can have a profoundly deadening effect.

Arranged and set out like so many beaniebag seats, this selection of pieces either written or 'recomposed' by David Shea during 1997 falls too often on the unchallenging side of pleasant for comfort. The thundering, unlikeliest climaxes of the opening "Dangerous Ground", its busy interplay between piano and tympani augmented by blasts of sampled orchestral arrangements lifted from the likes of Bernard Herrmann, Franz Schubert and Henry Mancini, suggest a far bawlier role than Shea is actually prepared to deliver. The stated politeness of the percussion on "A Space" and the insouciant twirling of "Janes" sound like industry-standard music: strikingly original compositions that don't so much defy criticism as render it superfluous. "Jade Mirror", in which Shea's spectacularly airy comely support to Dave Douglas's trumpet seems to have already crumbled itself.

In like manner both "Duo/Solo" and "Solo/Duo" pitch muted tonal explorations by

Douglas with nebulous accompanying samples by Shea into similarly bleak moments in time, done, dated and forgotten before the next track has even begun. "A Sackland" for three jaw harps has a little more edge to it, mixing some of the restless vibrancy to be found on such earlier Shea projects as *Pleasure* and *The Tower Of Hanoi*. It's a short-lived moment, however, quickly swallowed up by the aimless New Age droning of "Harmonies". "Elegy For Mano Bova" invokes the name of an aspired Italian film director for no other reason than to offer respite from titles which fail to acknowledge the difference between the provocatively abstract and the crushingly banal. Certainly the composition itself, a series of synthesized cascades to nowhere, cannot supply one.

A sheep in wolf's clothing, this is music that suffers too much from its own sense of virtue. A brief list of artists to whose work this collection is dedicated, including Toru Takemitsu, the late, great Hong Kong movie director King Hu and Ida Lupino, comes across more as an irrelevant disavowal than a genuine act of homage. The bino scrawl and yellow legged ad of Shea's elevennotes, overlaid with Sellotape and mottled black smudges, might suggest some splendidly dysfunctional trash vulgarity concealed within, but the actual content is rigidly art house.

KEVIN HOLLINGS

Sturm Sturm

PILE PLEASANT M950 CD

Reinhard Voigt, also trading as Kron, Sweet Reinhard and a member of the poppier Techno trio Forever Sweet, has delivered his best work to date with *Sturm*. Like *Life's A Gas*, the 1996 album by his elder brother Wolfgang/Ive Inc, the right pieces appear to be wholesale reworkings of popular source material. There's a clue, perhaps, in the cover sheet's fading strip of Scribbles.

London electronics operative Kingsuk Bhowmik, aka Bedouin Ascent, missed it a recent debate about the current role of software in music, that the more you filter sound samples through algorithms that

reproduce neural networks, and 'grow' rhythms in chaos-generating simulators, the more the extracted end product is 'funk'. Records like *Sturm* illustrate what he meant. It's not funk in its essential sense of sweat and soul, but a hybrid of the word's parallel meanings: grow/construct/assemble, a pleasure principle that builds on minute cues and disfunctions that add up to a sublime audio frötsage. The sources are lost to the process, but there's a distinct feeling that the resultant, exultant pieces waiting up on the final CD are mashed together chunks of the music that's caused the utmost rapture in Voigt's life — even if he's cued only a second or two from an entire record. With music constructed like this, there is no intro, no build-up, no release, just a constant sustained pleasure that only ends with the fade.

Voigt and his allies — and they're an expanding, weirdly named bunch, including Fennel, Nawald, Lufkas, Arowine, Low Res, Matras, Tene Thement — are aiming, as Scott did, for a total immersion, one that mobilises all pop's strategies for triggering raptures while foregrounding the mechanisms used in the process. They never let about the music's status as artificial construct. It seduces you, but it wants you to know you're free to leave at any time. For thoroughly modern lovers.

DOB THONG

Talk Talk London 1986

KNO LIFE FLV001 CD

Opening with a wisp of cod Sette piano, before the good ship Talk Talk heaves itself out of dry dock and into the hit *It's/It's What You Make It* this recording from a mid-80s tour by one of that decade's few enduring chart acts is barely different from the familiar studio versions on their 1986 album *The Colour Of Spring*. If anything, Mark Hollis's vocal is more hesitant, nervous chuck, and rather too much head to given to guttural David Shave's tuba-kickback solos. Drummer Les Hams — currently in the invisible Fourth World avant garde outfit Gong — copes manfully with the sequenced backing rhythms, although on "Does Caroline Know?" he's forced into lumpen boom-chick.

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timeless while all the fancy sequenced stuff
chitters away at centre stage.

But this much trumpeted Talk Talk live
album feels like short change. Their surviving
fans are really hanging in there because of the
music that was to come in the following two
years, when they burst their chrysalis and
produced the richly orchestrated, wrenching
rock of *Spirit Of Eden* and *Laughing Stock*. And
while the sound of the group awkwardly
emerging as butterflies in Hammersmith is
beautiful enough (the addictive shiver of "Give
It Up"), a studio-perfect "Living In Another
World" you have to wonder how Halls,
notoriously protective of his output, felt about
the whoops and clippings that accompanied
a lament like "Renée".

Overall, then, a less well recorded version of
their third best album. And when you're
dealing with as obsessive a perfectionist as
Halls, that's nowhere near good enough.
ROB THOM

**David Thomas/The Pale
Orchestra**

Mirror Man — Act 1, Jack & The
Cleveland

LOOKING VINYL CDD173 CD

Last spring David Thomas arranged a four day
series of events at London's Queen Elizabeth
Hall that went under the somewhat jokingly
forbidding banner, David Thomas
Disseidromes? Anyone brave enough to enter
was treated to a diverse carnival of creativity,
all of which perfectly mirrored the personal
take of Thomas as POC resident in his red
plastic apron. Those on board included The
Kinney Brothers (part of Cleveland's legendary
electronic blues group, 15-50-75), Doll By Doll
binder, Jackie Lewin, vocalist Linda Thompson
and singer/poet/producer Peter Himmel. All of
whom together with a host of guest musicians
(and performers) were finally rounded up to
take part in *Mirror Man*, Thomas's experimental
music drama in two acts that provided a
baffling, yet strangely satisfying climax to
Disseidromes's dodecadic delights.

This recording of the production's first act is
not only a rare flawless souvenir of Thomas's
brave experiment, it also amplifies the wealth
of ideas, sounds and drama imagery
hammered out at the QEH that evening. Free
of all visual props, the music, songs and
readings unfold to reveal the intricacies of the
project that got lost in the onstage bustle of
the live performance.

Bleedthrough the various fractured jazz,
blues, folk and rock themes is the moody
bellow of Thomas himself. Like a 90s
resurrection of Alfred Jarry's original Ubu
cradles, the narrative guides the audience
through an outsider's tour of old storming
grounds that playfully takes in personal
philosophies, cock-eyed observations and
nightmares, while paying silent homage to the
inspiration of Harry Rankin, Don Van Vliet, Jim
Thompson and (although I'm sure he'd be
loath to admit it) Tom Waits. His survival.

sensual and visceral vision gives *Mirror Man* its
strength and warped beauty.

SEBASTIAN POUNCEY

Trans Am

Futurworld

REBEL, JOCKEY TALL1062 CD

From the beginning Trans Am struck a true
balance between Progwave, Shellac-like rock and low-
cost avant electronics. Back in 1995, when
Tortoise's John McVie was producing their
first recordings, they had already amassed an
ample quotient of rock-based instrumental
material. A tour with Tortoise followed, and
although there was never a danger of them
becoming a Tortoise facsimile, the shows were a
catalyst for their assimilation of a post-rock ethic.

No two Trans Am records are alike — on the
earlier *The Sunburnt*, tracks of electronics
were masked by a full-blown homage to
garage rock, while *Futurworld* contains just
one guitar-driven track. In essence, there is a
bleak vision with a perspective drawn from the
austere electronics of the late '70s/early '80s,
depicting the future as a landscape of isolation
("Sitting alone in my futuristic driving fast and
going fast road, telephone futurworld all alone").

Eschewing millennium fever, the textures
here are dark and viscous, like an eclipse of
inky shadows floating across a cavernous
cellar (or a nuclear bunker, if you feel inclined
to enter the true paranoid angst of the 80s).
The inaugural use of electric vocals
embellishes the Devo-like "Television Eyes",
but the vocoder is employed to even greater
effect on the pulsating title track, which
sounds like Giorgio Moroder remixed a
Tangerine Dream/Cyndi Lauper alliance. Fragile
human whispers and synthesized words work
in tandem on the stellar beauty of "Runners
Streak". Stark and uncompromising, this
is their best record yet.
WILHELM PAVLA RUC

Ultra-Red

Second Nature

PHILIP PATELLE HMG CD

John Cage once wrote of conducting a private
listening experience, an open-air symphony
of "433", which incorporated the sound of two
cannibals copulating. His account makes no
mention of either animal being arrested or
subjected to continual harassment by park
keepers for what they were doing. *Second
Nature* is an electroacoustic pastoral
comprising a series of sonic acts, gestures and
statements recorded in and around Griffith
Park in Los Angeles which directly address the
question of public pleasure.
"I have but one request," Colonel Griffith
said in the 3500 acre park that still bears
his name over a century later, "that the public
— the whole public — enjoy with me this
beautiful spot." Despite having been the
acknowledged site of sexual flirting and all
freeso assignments of all kinds throughout its

history, the park has recently witnessed a
concerted effort to "eliminate homosexual
behaviour" by its rangers in response to such
provocation. Ultra-Red picks up and plays back
the sounds of sex, sedition, nature and protest,
organising their material around four main
themes: "lewd conduct", "noise control",
ecology and "curbed behaviours".

"Numerous activists have argued that an
effective resistance to homophobia must
directly engage the bourgeois nature of public
space itself," reads part of the detailed fold out
textual collage accompanying these recordings.
Not every subject position identified as gay
shares the same cultural or economic interests.
It is the role of the activist to embedden
disublimation within the material context of
bourgeois definitions of public space
definitions that are as rooted in economic
interests as they are in cultural interests."

Originating from Terre Phenetics's
discotheque label, *Second Nature* functions as
an ambient document in which the common
assumptions regarding music's engagement
with the series have been given a thorough
reworking, retracing the experience "back to the
utopian" Norman O. Brown, one of Cage's
favourite writers, argued in *Love's Body* for the
need to create a world in which we could all
run wild. "Simple masses of nature trees,"
reads a text imprint on the CD itself. "Simple
land forms. Mature grasses moved and
ingrained." Remember there is no such thing
as entrapment in nature.

KIM HOLLINGS

Cristian Vogel

Boaca Intestinales

RESON 110 CD/2LP

Vogel's sixth album starts off on the
discotheque before wandering off into an
interesting conversation at the bar. Tectonic
is the template and the Brighton-based
producer is an adept at blending his own
noises with generic clichés. With a
longstanding interest in experimental music,
he is great at throwing in surprising new
sounds over stock beats, but the music most
stays home consumption when not locked to a
bumping four-to-the-floor bass drum.
The album changes course about halfway
through with "Nelson Park Beach", a quirky
slice of offbeat electronics backed with the
sound of surf rolling in over pebbles. Vogel's
got an odd imagination but he's no mere
purveyor of whyness: he's genuinely interested
in feeding off dance culture and reconfiguring
it in ways that suit his preoccupations.
"Heroin Period", for example, juggles a range
baseline with strangely muted percussion and
a per se ardent repertoire of video game
electronic burps. "Sixes Of Six" underlays
clattering drums with a bass of lumbering
simplicity, before bringing in drooping phrases
of detuned guitar. Vogel is an art-friendly
experimenter, sweetening his less immediately
unpleasant notions with the recognisable. He
likes using rough edged sounds, and he gets a



Gamelan, 20th style

Various Artists

The Roots Of Gamelan

WORLD AFSTER 2001 CD

The story of Balinese gamelan's evolution and diffusion in the 20th century is compelling, equally absorbing is the convoluted story of Colin McPhee, Canadian-born composer, musicologist, sensualist and grouch. Where to begin?

The music on this CD comes from two separate sources, recordings of Balinese gamelan made in 1929 for the first commercially produced 78rpm discs of this music, and transcriptions for piano and flute played by Colin McPhee, Benjamin Britten and Georges Barrère, recorded in New York in 1941. The idea of establishing a market for discs of local music in Bali was a catastrophe. As Edward Herbst, author of an exceptional book called *Voices In Bali*, writes in his sleeve notes, "McPhee was the only customer to purchase these 78rpm discs in an entire year from one frustrated dealer; his collection contains most of the copies that are still preserved to this day, for the agent later smashed the remaining stock in a fit of rage." If nothing else, the story proves that long-term influence can grow in inverse proportion to retail success.

According to his biographer, Carol Oja, McPhee was closely connected to a New York social set of bohemians, intellectuals, artists and exotics. He heard the Balinese recordings in 1929 and asked himself, "How had this music come about? Above all, how was it possible, in this late day, for such a music

to have been able to survive?"

In fact, Balinese music was not simply surviving. With the consolidation of Holland's colonial administration, a new form of gamelan composition began to emerge. Called *kebyak*, it was fast, explosive, mercurial, hectic, as much an expression of the new century, in its way, as Stravinsky's *Rite Of Spring* or Louis Armstrong's *Hot Five*. To McPhee, fascinated by African-American culture, experimenting a little with mechanical rhythms and noise, searching for "crystal sound" — aerial and purely sensual, the Balinese discs were a revelation. In a sense, he never recovered, since his dedication to the study of Balinese music overshadowed his own composing, and ultimately his life. Sick from alcoholism and poverty, he died two years before his great work, *Music In Bali*, was published. The book had taken him 30 years to write.

A glimmer of tragedy flickers through this CD. One of the great pioneers of *kebyak* composition, I Wayan Loning, is heard on a number of tracks, directing gamelan in Kuta. Minutely choreographed, his music is like a dragonfly, hovering, darting fitfully, drawing inspiration to itself by its movement. Sourced directly from 78rpm discs, much of the sound is obscured by poor recording quality. Loning was recorded again, by Jacques Brunet (released in 1974 on French CBS), but as Herbst points out, many of the musicians were pretty ancient and out of practice by this time. Loning himself looks startlingly graceful in photographs, despite his toothlessness, and lived until 1983. Not long after Brunet's recordings, the gamelan was melted down so that younger players could order a new orchestra to play for tourists. As for Kuta, the island is now the fozza of South East Asia. McPhee's transcriptions are also plucked by the narrowness of the audio spectrum yet equally resonant with loss. Clearly, he couldn't find a way to successfully transmute his passion for Balinese music into a personal creative language. In fact, composing became a burden to him. Works such as *Tatah-Tatahan* and *Sute In Six Movements* are interesting for the psychological turbulence — a sense of deep gloom mingled with capricious high spirits — they bring to his Balinese inspiration but no substitute for the real thing. Though they strive in flights of heroic failure to capture the luminosity of Balinese gamelan, the transcriptions

were essential to McPhee's research. The piano was his equivalent of a tape recorder and he would copy phrases in his Balinese house until he had learned them. They also provided a physical relationship to the music, which was otherwise impossible: the Dutch authorities would have strongly disapproved of McPhee upsetting the colonial plan by sitting down crosslegged to play a gamelan instrument and he had other reasons to be wary of their attentions.

Benjamin Britten's involvement leads to a further subplot, another buried dream. As a gay man, McPhee found the sexual freedoms of Bali liberating. "Many times there was a decision to be made between some important opportunity and a sexual (homosexual) relationship that was purely sensual," he wrote in a letter. "I never hesitated to choose the latter." In England, Britten had been persecuted for his homosexuality. He and McPhee met at the home of the Meyer family in Long Island, a safe haven for gay men involved in the arts. McPhee introduced Britten to Balinese music, awakening an interest which led to Balinese elements being absorbed into a number of Britten's works. Musicologist Philip Brett has described gamelan as a "gay marker in American music," citing John Cage, Lou Harrison, Henry Cowell and Colin McPhee as important 20th century composers who had found inspiration in Indonesian gamelan music and who happened to be gay.

This begs a few questions: why gamelan as the marker and not Indian music or Turkish? What about heterosexuals who love gamelan? Yet Brett has a point. Gamelan has a glittering richness that encompasses spirit and sex. This is intriguing yet unexplored territory; perhaps the best we can venture at this point is that given a certain constellation of psychological and emotional characteristics, lovers of sound who grow up in an atmosphere of sexual repression, where spirit and sex are considered adversaries, are virtually pre-programmed to hear gamelan as the ultimate in beauty. The irony, of course, is that McPhee, who loathed the idea of mass tourism, helped contribute to Bali's reputation as an aesthetic, sexual paradise. The greatest tragedy of all is that his devotion, albeit unwittingly, has culminated in a relentless diminution of that glittering richness.

DAVID TOOP

long way from dancefloor norms without bucking the conventions entirely. He manages to preserve the physical underflow of dance music, but there are hints of prickly sonic ontologies swimming about in his mixes.

WILL FORTMEYER

Tom Waits

Mule Variations

EPIC/ATLANTIC 6547 CD/222K

Like a man living for years in a treehouse, Tom Waits has spent so much time out on a

musical limb it's getting almost comfortable out there in the wind and the rain. "I sleep like a baby with the snakes and the bugs," he says on "Cold Water." *Mule Variations* is his first release for nearly seven years. In the interval the rest of us have had a chance to catch up, so that Waits's abstruse soundworld seems a little less unerring than I used to

Since *Skag* (1983), his musical, to-a approach to production has evolved a growing influence. So now we have the farm cat rock of *Pinus* on the signature tune for the South-Park cartoons (that group's *Luv Daypup* could benefit bigly

this album). There's the mainstream success of Beck, with the highly liberated all-but-sink set of songs on *Odelay*. (Er-Beck guitarist Smokey Hornell is also on board for *Mule Variations*.) And there's the general fascination with American roots music, which is where Waits has been coming from for some time.

Mule Variations was recorded in a converted chicken coop in North California. Waits: "What's nice about it? In between takes, you can pee outside." On "Chocolate Jesus" you can hear a rooster clucking with the harmonica. The song was taped in the studio driveway using directional microphones for feline recording.

The 15 songs are mainly co-written and co-produced by Waits with his wife Kathleen Brennan. Each one simmers in a carefully constructed atmosphere, like a dark gulch concocted with patience but no recipe book. The soundscapes are extraordinary, as is the tension between precisely judged production and passionately spontaneous performance. Waits is a connoisseur of lo-fi, and achieves a lot by leaving things out. When the guitar solo erupts out of "Cold Water," the distortion and excitement of the sound is fully exposed.

Often you feel you're in the room with the musicians, smelling the chicken shit. The

soundcheck

songwriting too is very strong, in aspect of Watts work that is sometimes obscured by the reeking physicality of his performance. The blues infusion is pervasive, and the album is a celebration of the guitar, with John Hammond, Smokey Hornell, Marc Ribot and Joe Gore all present. Charlie Musselwhite contributes heart-rendering, deep-pitched harmonica. Then there's Watts's voice, not so much gravel, more like a truck full of aggregate about to unload on your lawn.

He is a vivid and theatrical performer on record, and Brennan acts maybe like a theatre director. One minute he is the mad trump rager at the Almighty, the next he's the jaded and heart-broke wanderer in a film noir elsewhere he comes on like a parlour hymn singer by the old underlaid piano "Eyeball Kid" sounds barely under control, the group coalescing and tripping over the junk percussion. The audience gasping, the singer ridden by demons to pour out the long wretched happens around him "House Where Nobody Lives" is all-American sentimentality at its best, and "Come On Up To The House" is a stirring hymn. "Come on down from the stage" you can use the word.

Eccentric, musically rich and wide-ranging, Mule Visions is classic Tom Waits. Stay onto the rope ladder — the man is in his prime, and he's got room for all of us up in the treehouse

CLIVE BELL

What We Live

Quintet For A Day

NEW WORLD RECORDS 85553 CD

What We Live are the Bay Area-based trio of Larry Ochs (tenor saxist with ROVA), Luke Ellis (bass) and Donald Robertson (drums). They've made a practice of adding a fourth member including, separately, trumpeters Wallace Leo Smith and Dave Douglas. Now both join the group for a day to form the quintet in question.

On a cursory listening, *Quintet For A Day* can appear fragmentary and abstract. But then the group's unusual approach to improvisation works its magic. The sleeve-note talks about a step back to a "more measured approach to collective improvising." That involves a loose — sometimes very loose

but pervasive swing feel. You could call this a "time no changes" approach, though it's totally different from the 60s Miles Davis paradigm.

"Hos striking is the sense of space. There's no chord instrument, and the bass and drums come across as lightly propulsive — perhaps the recording enhances the performance. The drums mostly drive the ensemble with a focus on lighter textures — cymbals and snare rather than bass drum. More elusive is the influence of new compositional approaches by Anthony Braxton, John Zorn and Leo Smith himself. But even defining the concepts gets tricky here. Smith, in his 1973 publication *Notes (8 Pieces)*, defended the status of improvisation as pure translation of the musical idiom, but more recently Evan Parker has tried to undermine the traditional distinction by talking of "improvisation as a compositional approach."

But it's the results that count, and they're very impressive. There are several fairly short tracks and two at 15 minutes: "Yours And Mine" has some harmonised, chorale-like passages. "Gone Tomorrow" features some of the freest vocal work by the two trumpeters in inspired vocal counterpoint. *Quintet For A Day* is a fine, refreshing release.

ANDY HARTLEY

Jah Wobble

Deep Space

30-66972 30-66929 CD

Approach this title with care — Deep Space might suggest Hawking's stoned cosmic musings or Model 500's pristine interstellar twinkles, but the latest release from Steppenwolf's finest practitioner of low end theory owes little to either. In fact, the space in question is generated by Wobble's continuing mission — to fuse the abstract caverns of the Celtic imagination with the echoing soundscapes conjured up by being by the mixing desk.

A succession of organic motorik rhythms, predicted as ever on Wobble's thumping less-is-more approach to bass playing, makes up the *Yarnemore* work here. The opening "The Immigrant" is the most restlessly kinetic, spun along by Jah's leadenly millimetrically precise revolutions, plunging and weaving for 13

minutes through a dizzying succession of reverent spaces. A pyrotechnical array of pipes and drones — kites, flutes, raudophone and crumhorn, supplied by Jean-Pierre Rueli and the Herli over Chie Bell — adds ringing flesh to the rhythmic bones, making up massive, hanging chords which twister on the brink of Prog portentiousness.

The next track, "The Transcendent", eases the pressure, melding piano clattering, ragged Celtic harmonies, and a stormy guitar drawl that might be out of place on a Pussy Gator record, into a down-tempo swirl of Ambient sound.

Wobble's music has increasingly attempted to induce states of biorhythmic sanctity by focusing on the simple wonder of the bass pulse. In keeping with this much of the music on *Deep Space* is a form of meditation.

Its casual beauty goes paid to allegations of New Age vapid — the album takes in the layered drones and calibrated dub effects of "Oaks, Winds And Veiling Curtains" and the prehistoric colour of "Fungal Planet" with equal poise.

Best of all, though, is the unwavering drum and bass mesh whose gentle insistence over 15 15 minutes takes the pace. "Gill Armaad At The Perfection Of A Rose Falls To Midnight Upon Quare", from space John Tavener-like whimsy into an immaculately searching and wonderfully measured exploration of sonic space.

CHRIS SHARP

Z'ev

Ghost Stories

SOLITUDE SOUND CD

Z'ev

Opus 3.1

SOLITUDE SOUND CD

Stefen Weiser was one precocious kid. A drummer at four, he had assembled his own homemade kit by the age of five, by his early teens the now re-christened Z'ev was a constant presence round the San Francisco Bay Area, spouting weird cabalistic poetry and raving junkyards to add to his ever-expanding armoury of percussion.

After playing for a while with Ralph recording artists Rhythm & Noise, he began to develop his distinctive solo "wild style" approach to proto-industrial noise. In 1979 he headed to New York, to drum on Glenn Branca's massive *Symphony #2*. He went on to record for the now defunct UK label Fehel, when he started turning up on bills alongside Throbbing Gristle and Non.

For the uninitiated there is a fantastic epoch-spanning box set, possibly still available on Touch, which spans Z'ev's vocal performances, his early turntable experiments and the thunderous sheet metal abuse and ritualistic tribal pounding he's best known for. Incredibly, these two fantastic discs on Solitude are his first American releases in 15 years.

Recorded in October 1990 in Amsterdam, Ghost Stories is a last hurrah for his patented "wild style", a technique that "utilised the physical movements of instruments through space". Though full of the visceral clanking of metal on metal it is not all purely percussive rage. Z'ev leaves plenty of space for tones to slowly develop and the music's mood is much more benign than, say, that of Enslavement. Neubeulen. There is no substitute for actually seeing him perform, however, knowing manually between contraptions, launching himself at piles of metallic debris.

Of this pair, *Opus 3.1* provides the real meat. Originally a limited release on *Steelplate*, it features Z'ev's specially penned cabalistic writings, as per the artist's original demand, complete with quotes from Australian fantasist Gustav Meyrink and a dedication to James Hendrix.

Recorded live over four hours in the De Duf church in Amsterdam, the sound this one main creates is vast and deep. At times, it gets as dense as prime APM. But what differentiates Z'ev from the British materialists is the heavy devotion to art he brings to the proceedings with all manner of ritual ethnic percussion — Tibetan cymbals, Ghanaian lion skin drums and Balinese gamelan are all sounded. Working from such an expanded sound palette, Z'ev fills the performance space with transcendental vibrations, bringing forth voices from the depths of his inanimate materials.

DAVID KERRAN

sulfur

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FUTURE PILOT A.K.A. Vs A GALAXY OF SOUND

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the boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

Though they managed to breach British punk's blockade of America, **Pere Ubu** were never comfortable with the geekshow status they acquired in the process. As if unhinged by the pain of being misunderstood, the songs on their second album, 1978's *Dub Housing* (Cooking Vinyl COOK170 CD), still swing hard with the distorted avant-R&B lurch of the tracks on *The Modern Dance*, but now they sounded more precarious, like Quierados on rotgut just out of reach of his baying tormentors. By 1979's *New Phonic Time* (Cooking Vinyl COOK171 CD), Ubu's steatoid surrealism was dissolving in shrieks round the quivering mess of vulnerability at their core. Here vocalist David Thomas went beyond articulating verses bordering madness to staging the communication breakdown of insanity in gibbering and drooling songs that seemed to be saying, "You want geek? You got it!" Like cultures, geek show commensals find death the real turn on. You need to

enrobe the **Cheet Baker of Romance** (Pacific Jazz 724349786023 3xCD) with the snaky myth of his decline to make his soppet 50s music sound interesting. The pale blue him and even paler voice here their charms, but spread across three discs the style often wears tirelessly thin. Music that swings low isn't necessarily farthing Death's choroi. In the early 70s, baritone saxophone **John Surman**

recorded a number of early UK free jazz experiments for the UK Dawn label, now repackaged by Sequel as two double CDs, both titled *The Dawn Sessions: One Features his trio with Stu Martin and Barre Phillips* (Sequel NEECD303 2xCD). The music is bruising and songful in about equal measure: two CDs of exhilarating improv and snapshot composition recorded on a single day in March 1970. The other *Dawn Sessions* (Sequel NEECD302 2xCD) is credited to John Surman & Friends, and collects *Where Fortune Smiles*, a quartet with John McLaughlin, and the *Live At Woodstock Town Hall* duet with Stu Martin. On the former, Karl Berger's vibes hammer forward progress, but Surman and McLaughlin were a forthright team. The 1976 Woodstock date is ungarnished raw. Anyone coming to it via Surman's ECM records may be shocked by the scruffy recording, clattering percussion and use of weary analogue electronics.

AR Kane were probably thinking of something else than the date when they called their 1988 debut album *Sixty Nine* (Rough Trade REORUGHCD005 CD). Also Ayulu's tethered voice still sounds like

innocence rudely trampled by a sudden rush of knowledge. Screamed vocals shadow headsets, the gleaming psychocass: chambers fashioned by Rudy Tamblola from plastic rhythm machines are still enveloping, but delicate as mothwings. On the follow-up, *Y'IREROUGHCD004 CD*, the engaging nimety of the debut gradually breaks down in face of a desire to make Italian House style pop on the one hand, and "banned" rock on the other.

More echo chamber odayays on the latest in the *Blood And Fire* label's exemplary series of **King Tubby** resurges *Out Life Out* (BAFCD0026 CD). Released to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Tubby's death at the hands of a Jamaican gunman, the CD compiles 16 discs of tracks by vocalists Johnny Clarke, Horace Andy, Leroy Smart and others mixed by Tubby between 1975-77 at his legendary studio in Kingston's Waterhouse district. Drum and bass music of infinite depth and discretion.

The current archaeology of 70s Japanese underground rock is dentering some intriguing music. By anybody's reckoning **Taj Mahal Travellers** August 1974 (P-Vine PCD14634 2xCD) and their leader **Takemasa Kosugi's** *Wain Solo* 1980 NYC (P-Vine PCD5765 CD) are real finds. Kosugi has been active as an avant-garde violinist, conceptualist and composer since the early 60s. The motley crew he led on this, the second *Taj Mahal Travellers* record, sounds, bangs and plucks on voices, percussion, various ethnic instruments and numerous primitive electronic devices, creating a bewitching fog of voices and shambolic grooves. Kosugi's highly abstract solo disc features plenty of fast, staccato passages, great tonal control and very little of the abrasive wince so common to solo violin records.

Precisely nadie is known about the mid-70s Japanese releases **Brast Burn's** *Deton* (Paradigm PDD7 CD) and **Karuna Khyal's** *Alomoni* 1985 (Paradigm PDD8 CD). The CDs were mastered from mint original vinyl editions, as the Paradigm label's attempt to contact the groups came to nothing if anyone has any information about the groups, the label would love to hear from you. Both discs feature plenty of creepy chattering and phased Japanese vocals. Brast Burn open out weird folk forms with trance guitar. Karuna Khyal throw together test tones, bleating horns and space drones, all filtered through Cosmic Groups-styled studio processes. [Reviewed by Richard Cook, Alan Cummings, Tony Herrington, David Kemman, Bibo Kipl and Rob Young]



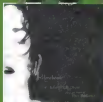
POWERFIELD
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Joe Gallus, Guy Jinks, Al Thomas
(WAAATCUTR001)



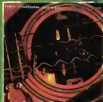
HIGH RISE
Overheated
Kazuo Ueda, Masahito Ikeda and Shigeo Imai
Live in Paris
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I SHORT 1980
Overheated
Kazuo Ueda, Masahito Ikeda and Shigeo Imai
Live in Paris
(WAAATCUTR003)



NERACRASH
Electric noise, electric rhythm
The music of Karl Sackel
(WAAATCUTR004)



ILE DE LA REUNION
Helen
Fiona Vey
(WAAATCUTR005)



NERACRASH
Electric noise, electric rhythm
The music of Karl Sackel
(WAAATCUTR004)



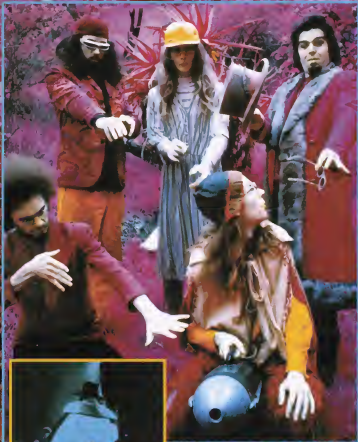
MAS'OU'D SHAARI
Mas'ou'd Shaari
Live in Paris
(WAAATCUTR006)



MAS'OU'D SHAARI
Mas'ou'd Shaari
Live in Paris
(WAAATCUTR006)



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CARGO
RECORDS

in brief avant rock

Reviewed by Edwin Pouncey

Auburn Lull Alone I Admire

EMERSON 58202 CD

The exotic, Ambient, slo-mo drive that McHugh's Auburn Lull embark upon with this, their first full album, is a journey along a lost highway that is seemingly free of bumps, potholes, and roadkill. *Alone I Admire* could almost be the soundtrack for a future David Lynch production, a soft-focused lulling hum of a record that cruises along without incident while, at the same time, hinting at unseen alien menace. Elegantly produced and sampled by Andrew Prinz, here's music with the power to invade your dreams.

Damon & Naomi & Batoh & Kurihara It's All Over Now Baby Blue/Too Do Right gemmy

GERMANY 11

A long, cool, clear vinyl 45 which captures ex-Galaxie 500 duo Damon Kravitz (guitar, vocals) and Naomi Yang (bass, vocals, harmonica) jamming live with Japanese guitarists Masaki Batoh from Ghost and Michio Kurihara of White Heaven fame. Their essence-rendering of the Dylan classic remains mostly true to the original, until it lifts off with a huge surge of psychedelic guitar power from Kurihara that must have left the assembled throng clutching the walls in ecstasy. For an encore they rip into the Can number that Batoh covered once before on his solo CD. The version creates the sound illusion that it was recorded at San Francisco's Fillmore West circa 1968, rather than at some obscure club in Massachusetts last April.

The Deviants The Deviants Have Left The Planet

CANADA 18 CD

This collection compiles studio scraps and later live snuff from fabled British underground improvisers The Deviants, fronted by musician/lyricist Mick Farren. Here, Farren's bark of a voice is given extra bite by LA guitarists/bassist Andy Colquhoun, whose primal playing style is perfectly in tune with the revolutionary spirit of the original 60s Sound Deviants. Elsewhere the inclusion of an excellent 1977 version of "Let's Lose The Supermarket," with former cohorts Larry Walls and Paul Rudolph battling it out on guitar, further feeds the feedback feeling. A beautiful way to go.

DragKing indie Authenticity

CHISEL HARBOREDISCORATION NUMBER CD

Put this on the dark and you could be forgiven for thinking that this was a newly discovered set of Trout Mask Replica outtakes,

so precise is Chicago group DragKing's impression of Beefheart's Player Band. Further along and this homage is boosted with a set of rowdy, cocktail songs featuring sampled segments from the dead ones, Royal Trux, Pavement, The Dead C, A Handful Of Dust and Jamban dub producer Joe Gibbs. The resulting chub sounds like a Negativland rehearsal tape, and even closer to what comic jazz bandleader Spinal Jones might have come up with if he had turned totally punk.

Terry Edwards Birth Of The Scapogato

HUNGARY 4 CD

All of Terry Edwards and his Scapogato! Peel Sessions (and more) collected on one easily digestible disc which only the terminally miserable will find hard to swallow. Coming across, at times, like some 90s mutation of The Bonzo Dog Band, Edwards and The Goats blast and bore their way through a manic selection of trippier, weirder and even weirder of old punk favorites. These include a big band arrangement version of The Fall's "Bismillah's Breakout" (sic), a string-driven "New Rose" (or "my favourite") a medley of Napalm Death chugs performed in the style of Albert Ayler. Something for everybody, then.

Enemy Mine Enemy Mine EP

KING 6143 CD

Enemy Mine is a US trio made up from members of godhead Silt and Low, two groups that specialized in playing either skull grazing indie rock or subdued minimalist slum. They are a combination of both styles, replete with a sometimes stunning guitar sound that, amazingly, is generated by two bass guitars. The brutal, rhythmic drum and bass beatings here are fairly reminiscent of early Swans, while the occasional use of distorted electronics adds an extra shade of black to Enemy Mine's already scorched sound palette. A taste that leaves you aching for more.

Fonn Fonn EP

FAT CAT 1247018 2X12

A big floating blob of guitars, drums, electronics and FX that drifts laconically out of the speakers without going pop. Instead Fonn strain their backbones over their instruments, and weave out a set of intricately composed, rock based instruments and synthesized electronic soundscapes that could easily be attributed to the influence of Torosie et al, but owes as much to the pioneering new wave guitar prismism of, say, early Post Punks. Fonn's music bristles with some of that group's broad vision and spirit, all of which is tightly packed into the grooves of a double vinyl debut

growing with good ideas. The set's gradual metamorphosis from playful acoustic/electric Grunge to harsh, improvised Krautrock rumble is astonishingly seamless, and the impact it leaves behind is massive and immensely satisfying.

Hood The Cycle Of Days And

SEASONS (GEMO WIS2041 CD)

Last back 90s English! Industrial stoner folk that takes an eternity to spit out whatever message it is trying to put across. Recorded last summer in 'a converted Victorian school building in Yorkshire' with help from Faust fanatic Richard Formby and Third Eye Foundation man Matt Elliot, Hood's "what we did on our holidays" opus is a heavily loaded rock-out with a few instruments, FX and voices thrown in for good measure. Hood have obvious Galaxie 500/Damon & Naomi pretensions, own a full set of Nick Drake LPs and desperately want to be taken seriously. I honestly wish them well.

Monaural Monitor Interference

BLACK DING BING CD

Monaural sings you on an electro glide through the streets and stratosphere of south east Michigan to prove that different musical life forms (other than straight-edged punk) are alive and thriving in the Motor City. The mood here is mostly urban Ambient, where the shaker, rattle and roll of their industrial environment is slowly and subtly sucked into the group's smoking sound chamber. Once past the plodding dub opener — which has more of a whiff of Talking Heads than King Tubby to it — Monitor interference opens up and heads off into its own orbit. Monaural are at their best, however, when they inadvertently stray away from the tagging chain of repetitive beats to which they have blissfully shackled themselves.

Dickie Peterson Tramp

TRAMP CD 162 CD

Dickie Peterson was once the voice and bass behind Blue Cheer, the almighty 60s power trio whose debut album *Vince & Dickie* is now regarded as an avant rock classic. This live compilation, recorded in Cologne in 1995-96, shows that Peterson is still a rock 'n' roll rebel at heart even though the creative inferno that brewed when he BC days has now been reduced to a chortly gag. Featuring his versions of songs by such heroes as Hendrix, Albert King and JJ Cale, together with original material and a somewhat predictable airing of Eddie Cochran's "Summertime Blues", Tramp isn't really going anywhere he hasn't been already.

310 Prague Rock EP

310 NOD EP ROCK 1247121

Even though the plundering of rock bebop back catalogues is nothing new (The Residents, John Oswald and, more recently,

Fernes being classic examples), US duo 310's valiant attempt to push the plunderphonic genre close to the edge of self-destruction is well worth tracking down. The "Prague" in the title is an allusion to "Prag" — as in Progressive rock — and their chosen words include such dross as Genesis, King Crimson, Pink Floyd, Jethro Tull and Yes. Half the fun of the EP is trying to identify the various songs given to the constructors. Get them all correct and you've won a trout farm in another life. The theme is extended on "Shaving The Tiger" which takes up a third of 310's Nod. This time Hierkio is cut up and orchestrated to produce a sleek black panther of a mix, complete with fangs and claws.

Songs: Ohia Access & Access

STORYS CANADIAN S24 CD

It's almost impossible to listen to Jason Molina's pen-winded woe — the driving force behind Songs Ohia — without thinking of Wil Cozart and that first Place Brothers album. Punks meet that Molina is coming from a totally different direction, but the similarity is so close, it's worth intellectually arm wrestling over. These sparsely arranged and powerfully performed songs are haunting and tender in a positive way, you understand. The standard track, "Redhead," is an American gothic ballad that creakily never loses its sleek skeletal weight of a satiated gale on the ocean floor. This is deeper down music fresh with promise and new hope.

When Psychodelic

WUNDERBASM JESTER ROCK 004 CD

These looney tunes and many melodies come from a couple of nutty Norwegians (Lars Pedersen and Bjørn Solnnes). Some psychedelic soundscapes are so generic laden eventually becomes imitating. Guest speakers (according to the homily designed and ultra cheap cardboard cover) include author Tom Wolfe and Alastair Crowley, the former *Great Beast* who, had he still been alive to this, would have undoubtedly relished the opportunity of turning *When* into a couple of toads.

Yossarian Elegiac

YESSA SARTILL 57015 CD

According to the accompanying press release, "Yossarian makes music for those who like sounds of the more twisted variety." As a seasoned connoisseur of twisted music, however, I found little here to prick my scalp. Instead Yossarian (real name Tim Lordon) dishes up a late '90s psychedelic view of enigmatic synth pop anthems, most of which attempt to cling on to the same brand of electro warp that The Silver Apples dropped from in the 60s. "Witches & Bitches" has the spirit of Sirens, in "A Poet As You" made, moving through on first listen, but the closer you get to it, the more it sounds like Thriller Horro's Bugles abandonment. Oh dear.

in brief classical

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

Oren Ambarchi/Rohbie

Avneim: The Alter Rebbe's

Nigun (Tasque) 12131 CD

Hasidic folklore from the Antipodes: Ambarchi and Avneim once played with Australian punk outfit Phlegm. Here they attempt to render in four movements the creation of the cosmic order. Gutters thrash and screech, reads drone, percussion rumbles, electronics buzz eerily. The ingredients are all fairly familiar, yet the outcome is a pleasingly strange. Robie Yankel Leiser helps out with recitation on the final section, which also features some heavy duty chanting.

Birdhouse: Birdhouse

RECORD

Jon Carter has played guitar with Led Zeppelin's rocking Forever Bad Blues Band. Colorado soprano Meredith Birden has performed work by Harry Partch, Meredith Monk, Elodie Lujan and Philip Glass. Left to their own devices, the results are uniformly dry. Microtuned transcriptions of birdsong apparently form the basis of their material, but acknowledging Oliver Messiaen in the sleeve notes doesn't compensate for its numbing banality. And no amount of reference to just intonation can justify the squandering of what are doubtless real talents, given suitable direction.

Olivia Block: Pure Gaze

SEMI-ALBUM

Chicago-based Olivia Block plays guitar with a group called The Portable Body until 1995. Since then, using found objects and tramp, she has engaged in site-specific performances, including work with Pauline Oliveros, and has devoted herself to electroacoustic composition; that, on this evidence, demands serious attention. Pure Gaze evolves over 30 minutes, starting from intriguing rustling and percussive popping. A glorious sequence of unison chords, played on wind instruments, subtly embellished with electronics, seems consciously to echo David Behrman's magisterial *On The Other Ocean* and *Leopoldy Night*. Then, subdued field recordings conclude this impressively assured debut.

Darren Copeland: Remdu

VISUALS

Canadian electroacoustic composer Darren Copeland builds evocative soundscapes from environmental recordings. His manipulation of birdsong, sea sounds, and other sources appears minimal, but the

three pieces here have a distinctly composed feel, nonetheless. At times the layering grows dense, but it is orchestrated to avoid clutter and conveys the same impression of spaciousness that emerges from more sparsely populated passages. Enhanced documentary for the ear.

Stephen Drury: Faith, The Loss

OF FAITH, AND THE RETURN OF FAITH

ALBUM

A recital in which virtuosic pianist Stephen Drury spans 150 years, running a truncated version of Liszt's *Transcendental Studies* into Stockhausen's *Klavierstück IX*, which mutates into Beethoven's *Chaconne*, in turn culled with Beethoven's *Sonata in A Flat*. An object lesson in the ability of strong performance style to cross the border and close the gap. It's the craggy pianism that holds the attention.

Evelyn Ficarra: Prætoric

MID-ALBUM

Evelyn Ficarra studied electronic music with Jonathan Harvey. Her tape work has a freshness and vitality increasingly rare in the genre. Concrete sounds derived from kitchen activity, shortwave radio, machines, speech and birdsong are handled with humour and sensitivity, and never seem mere effects. The title piece is for tape alone the other five compositions add, respectively, string quartet, voice, violin and mamba, and harpsichord and baroque flute. All are elegantly structured and deftly arranged, offering a restorative for listeners ailing from electroacoustic lethargy.

Gishburg: Trust

TRUST

This is Gishburg's third CD for Tasque. She has also recorded with Dieter Schnebel, Anthony Coleman and John Zorn. *Hearts Don't Break That Easily*, an 'opera' for solo voice lamenting lost love, is a 24 minutes of deceptively uninteresting self-indulgence. *Alma*, a wistful string quartet weaving frail melodic snippets through a fabric of repetition, is more satisfying but lacks evident purpose.

Jonas Knuutson: Mälgomaj

ALBUM

The title refers to a lake in Lapland. The music — on this latest Scandinavian New Music — is — is designer ethnological forgery, composed by a sub-Gabarets saxophonist, who trained at Stockholm's Academy. Mya and much instrumental exotica, from kalimba to duduk, decorate the calculated mellowness.

Alexander Krein: After Scriabin

ALBUM

Increasing recognition that the late work of Alexander Scriabin was an important catalyst in the development of early 20th century music has thrown up interesting figures, drawn along in his wake. Krein is such a composer. His music fuses elements of Jewish folk tradition with Scriabin's proto-Modernism, conserving and advancing simultaneously. Harmonic audaciousness, especially evident in the *Symphony No. 1* (1922-25) and *Piano Sonata* (1922), connects with centuries of Jewish music making, while adding a contemporary taste for mystical founesses.

György Kurtág: Kafka

FRAGMENTS

Hungarian composer György Kurtág has been fragile in his output, but he has built an unassailable reputation as a post-Webernian *hyperstyle*. *Kafka Fragments*, written in 1985-86, uses 40 brief, anxious and ironic tales against approximately nine solo violin Finnish soprano Aino Kallia sustains the nervous tension across 54 minutes, guided by Sakari Oramo's edgy accompaniment. Seriously rewarding, if discomforting, music.

Romero Lubambo: Lubambo

ALBUM

All but one of these dozen pieces are Lubambo's own compositions, conceived for ensemble but realised alone, on the insistence of John Zorn. His classical guitar training, at the Villa-Lobos School in Rio, has equipped Lubambo to shape materials drawn from jazz and Brazilian idioms into fluent yet clearly delineated structures. Exemplary artistry that transcends genres, from a man who has played with Astrid Gilberto and Harry Belafonte.

Giacinto Scelsi: Kyo, var poem

ALBUM

Giacinto Scelsi, an Italian artist/scholar with extensive knowledge of Eastern philosophy, developed a distinctive voice in 20th century music, yet it was only around the time of his death in 1988, aged 80, that his work started to receive the attention it certainly deserves. He explored the inner life of sounds, the sonorification of sonic particles, often within ostensible settings. The chamber pieces on *Kyo* are generally more distinctly articulated, although the weaving of recurrent pitches is typical. Jung Wytenbach, a Swiss specialist, oversees expert performances. Saxophonist Marcus Weiss, the main soloist, plays impeccably *Kyo*. Don Rudeo & Gek featuring piccolo, The Pizzos, and Yarnston, featuring bass, are from the 1950s. *Alphonso* dates from 1976. Not an entirely representative introduction for new listeners, but those already initiated will recognise a substantial recording.

Steffen Schiermacher: Sonnet

ALBUM

Steffen Schiermacher's respectful solo performances affirm the worth of these composers beyond providing a context for the emergence of Shostakovich.

James Tenney: Music For Voices

ALBUM

First recordings of music by this important and still inadequately documented composer. The set opens with Tenney's pioneering, indeterminate tape piece *Ergodic II* (1964), augmented with scored instrumental responses from violinist Mark Sobot and pianist Stephen Cliveden. Two other lengthy pieces, *Knox* (1971) and *Diaphoric* (1967), illustrate the stylistic variety of Tenney's oeuvre. On *Knox*, Sobot takes instantly yet subtly, conjuring images of change out of repetition. On the meticulous *Diaphoric*, the instrumentalists mutually sustain a precarious balance, each simultaneously threatening to topple the other. Three tie-breaker pieces are also included: *As Art*, large obnoxious in his sleeve notes, Tenney writes 'the analytical characteristics of a tone scientist', but he belongs in the company of Ives, Ruggles, Nancarrow, Cage and Partch.

Andrew Toovey: Reed Joints

ALBUM

Andrew Toovey's most thrives upon the coexistence of extremes, it is tough as catgut, even when its surface settles into gentle indolence. On *Shrimp Form*, named after a painting by Barnett Newman, acrobatic violin and cello each line across blind, yielding piano. On the orchestral *Red Lion*, alluding to Mark Rothko's art, translucent washes veer into percussive bludgeoning. *American Abstract* (excruciating pairing provides Toovey's benchmark for structural and semantic harmony or dissonance. His studies with Morton Feldman and Michael Finnissy helped develop the means to find its musical equivalent. Solo pieces for cello and piano complete a powerful programme. []

Genotype: *hsc-1* *hsc-2*

in brief global

Reviewed by Richard Henderson

The Baluchi Ensemble Of Pakistan Love Songs & Trance

HYPERION SACRED 66015 CD
The statistics Baluchi tribe numbers ten million people spread throughout Pakistan and Iran. Their songs for weddings and trance music are accompanied by leading of inhuman speed and fluidity, an amped up counterpart to the singing and voice settings of the North Indian classical canon. Other structural similarities to Indian music include the occasional lengthy introduction, which resembles the alap portion of a raga.

The Moroccan Brotherhood Of Jilala

JILALA BILALAHAMAKASHA-SAGGOUN CD
Ira Cohen, film maker and contemporary of Jack Smith and Tony Conrad, originally issued *Jilala* in the late 60s on his DIY label Trance Judging from its ambience, The Moroccan Brotherhood Of Jilala were probably recorded in Bronx GYM's 1001 Nights club in Tangiers, which somewhat contradicts the "observed in the field" recording of field recordings. When a recording produces so many electronic moments, who's got time for academy handclapping? Double record thus players who themselves into a hyperventilated past state, while the drummers (coming on like a horde of primordial John Bonhams, routinely overstate the levels on author/composer Paul Bowles's tape recorder. The music was made to accompany barefoot dancing on hot coals. You should work out to hear it.

Various Artists Aka Pygmyes

OLCMA CIGAR 11 CD
This collection of "Hunting, Love And Mocking Songs" bypasses the folklike of hooting chorns most commonly associated with the often recorded Aka Pygmyes. It is more a chamber work for biggish harp

zither, riblike flutes, mbarle one-string and erbeti two-string mouth bow and solo vocals. The ensemble is recorded with the clarity and intimacy characteristic of the French Ocora label. While most of the music emanates from the Lobbe region in the Central African Republic, some performances were taped on tour in Europe. Inevitably, the Swiss and Italian locations miss out the insect merace that normally forms the backdrop to the Pygmyes' music. However, the casual yet heartfelt two of the performers remains intact. "Sleep Now, Master Of The Pems" takes the award for the year's best song title.

Various Artists Among The Spirits Sound Music And Nature In Salbas And Tuvra

PROFANUS SPIN4542 CD
These recent recordings, made in southern Siberia, document the musical symbols between man and nature. With evan and insect session players much in evidence, tracks are skillfully crosswired in order to underscore "the wonderfully permeable border" between human and non-human musical worlds. Skilled memory of local animal song alternates with the inimitable onetime throat singing that put Tuvra on the map of World Music. Grgen Morjav's whistling is the sound of calligraphy unbroken, poignant and majestic.

Various Artists The Arthur S Albors Collection: More Tribal, Folk And Cafe Music Of West Africa

AFRICA SEMINOLE SCORPIO CD
When *Tribal, Folk And Cafe Music Of West Africa* first appeared as a set of 12 78rpm discs in 1950, it laid bare the roots of jazz. Arthur Albers provided an insight into the urban sounds of the day comparable to that

afforded by Harry Smith's *Anthology Of American Folk Music*. Here one finds the tugging interplay of horn and acoustic guitar as performed by the Mainline of French Guitars, tri-tone-inducing chords and polyrhythmic water splashing mere degrees away from the funk of George Clinton, stonecutters from Liberia pulling beads of wonder from their hummers and disals. Meanwhile the shuffling cafe music from Zanz performed by gracious couplings of concertina and clarinet, anticipates the sugar-soaked souliness to come decades later.

Various Artists Are 'Are Intimate And Ritual Music Of Ower

GUHONGS OR274563 CD
The 'Are 'Are Intimate music come from the Solomon Islands in the Pacific Ocean. Vintuosos of the Melanesian bamboo panpipe, they spin melodies as rich in harmonic detail as they are fragile. Preserved by venerable recorder Hugo Zemp, these songs and performances are the final vestiges of a musical culture long extinguished by the legalist and devout of various missionaries over the past two centuries. How anyone could categorize such amiable melodies as the devil's music is beyond me, but to Zemp's credit, the 'Are 'Are's "Intimate and ritual" repertoire survives in its multidimensional splendor on the well annotated disc. The high impact lag drumming ought to interest fans of Steve Reich.

Various Artists Music From Rwanda

UNESCO ANTHOLOGY OF WORLD MUSIC SERIES, RESURRECTED WITH NOTES, MUSICAL NOTATION AND PHOTOS IN THE
The drumming and songs provide the genocide conflict between Rwanda's Tutsi and Hutu tribes, who are both featured on this disc. Could there be a secret nutrient in the headwaters of the Nile that inspires such muscular percussion, which is not dissimilar to the neighbouring Royal Drummers of Burundi? The male chorales vocalise with ferocity, and

the nanga, a trough zither indigenous to the mountainous region, is played in a manner which, no doubt, the little girls understand.

Various Artists The Secret Museum Of Maryland Vol 8 Ethnic Music Classics 1925-48

14000-1014 CD
One of a series curated by Professor Pat Cone, this volume pits field hollers against beguine orchestras. Tautlin choros next to Ukrainian violinists, and so on. All two dozen tracks are drawn and remastered, with varying degrees of success, from Cone's huge trove of 78s. The Secret Museum's output is ample testimony to an era when record buyers were sufficiently curious about different cultures, even if only as a novelty, to take a gamble with the vocal volutions of Syria's Youssef Harb or the ur-headness of a South Rhodian group. The big pay off is discovering something as lovely as the Habdostes sisters, gaily reminiscent from the Angles Islands, duetting on a song called "Angels Spread Their Wings".

Various Artists The Yoruba/Dahomean Collection Onihias Across The Ocean

360 RHYTHMUS 801 0405 CD
The latest part of releases in Hickey Hart's Enslaved Music Project (see also the *Tribal, Folk And Cafe Music Of West Africa* CD reviewed above) bookend the musical combat between Africa and the West Indies, tragically facilitated by the slave trade. *Onihias Across The Ocean* collects the music of Brazil, Cuba, Haiti and Trinidad, gathered during early 40s expeditions. The anthology gives voice to the "Isles of the spirit" chronicled by Robert Farris Thompson, with invocations to the deities of voodooism, shaman and Gandombi, the syncretic religions of unwilling emigres to the New World. A fervent and a sustained throughout, as the descendants of Nigeria's Yoruba emigres aim to reconnect with the spirit realm. The square drums speak the singer's will, and the cowbell patterns anticipate Hannu Gyele's "Get To Give It Up Part 1".



Jazz is a collective enterprise, a give-and-take among musicians that generates a larger, more complete statement than any leader could elicit through a rigid, closed system. Joe Maneri has accumulated some of the same as his music has begun to be heard over the past decade, and not simply because the music he creates is so fresh.



The world of Ren Bieksa beckons once again in these performances and, once again, we cannot resist being drawn into that world. The cinematic content of Bieksa's music, its use of metaphor and dramatic discourses, his long been acknowledged. Extra-musical allusions are unavoidable when music evokes all five senses, as Bieksa's music inevitably does.



Shipp's music deploys his own thought process, and in this lays out a physical trail reflecting the way that three players think along with each other. Following those thoughts leads us deep into the jazz style that has sprung like Athens from the brow of Zeus, out of the body of jazz preceding it.

in brief jazz

Reviewed by Richard Cook

Bright Moments Return Of The

Loon Tribe *Return Of The Loon* (Jazz) 054 CD

The tribe are first-generation AACM members, and with Joe Jernian, Kalapahua, Michael Favors and Steve Cobbin in the group, the pedigree is obvious. Interesting remark by leader Kahlil El-Zabar that "the physical ability" to play this kind of jazz is leaving the music: what, can't we lift up saxophones any more? Either way, the music here makes one think of physical failings, too. They sound, sad as it is to say, old and tired. Kalapahua, making his first appearance in years, appears to be practicing in the studio, and the others are juggling, or just standing, on the spot. Very disappointing.

Guigou Chenevier Rhythms Of

The City *Rhythms Of The City* (Jazz) 054 CD

Sounds more like yé yé old rock, really, something like Akik Mabou or Gentle Giant, even if it pops up as jazz when drummer Chenevier lets his seven strong French group off the tight leash of his compositions — which isn't very often. Some lyrical twists to be had out of the turn, although the odd interpolation of amateur players as, effectively, samples in the main body of the music isn't as cute as the leader thinks.

Paul Dunnally Octet Belvoir

Starburst *Belvoir* (Jazz) 054 CD

If this is a tribute to bebop, it's oblique in the extreme, since there's no top in it aside from the opening flurry. Instead, five horns and rhythm section play a cozy old British free jazz furrow. Long solos and a bit of writing to put them up don't constitute "a major contribution to the canon of works for largesse improvisation ensembles" and the most worthwhile entry — Paul Rogers's bass solo — is more like a soliloquy in the middle than a part of the flow.

The Fully Eclectic

Orchestra Right On *Right On* (Jazz) 054 CD

All three of them, two earlier discs by the too seemed jolly. The time, seaman Jim Hobbs sounds heavy hearted, though no less energetic. The trio play with bluff abandon. They barrel forward rather than swing, and the rough recording mitigates against them, but there's much heart and soul — the latter particularly celebrated by the daff sweetness.

Jonas Hellborg Aram Of The

Two Rivers *Aram Of The Two Rivers* (Jazz) 054 CD

Since most of us know squat about World

Mus — I generalise, but that's a former Wire editor's privilege — something like this session, recorded live in Damascus by an ensemble of bass guitar, ney, violin, nag and two (count 'em) dulzinas, has to girth by on its serene sensuality. Short on Syrian expense or involvement, the rest of the world takes this on as coffee table exotism. Hellborg sends this back like it's a postcard from Marco Polo and I enjoyed it — but I rarely keep postcards.

Peter Kowald Cuts The 40

Prayer *Cuts The 40* (Jazz) 054 CD

Freely we get to an outstanding record though I would have liked to hear German bass player Kowald take a performer's role, he still weaves his customary magic on a workshop group of improvisors (plus guest stars Evan Parker, Li Qian Ninh and Carlos Zingaro) in episodes of studio work following months of weekly training sessions, so to speak. The result is spontaneously roned by discipline, a textbook of improvising procedures brought to real life. Since it's a big ensemble (25 performers) it's a bit of a mess, clouded over, but the music sounds a lot better than on some of Balch Morris's similar journeys.

Urs Leimgruber & Frits

Hausser *Urs Leimgruber & Frits Hausser* (Jazz) 054 CD

In the barest of bare bones packaging, sax and drums engage in 50 minutes of dialogue. A good pairing, since two loud instruments are able to give each other no quarter on sensitivity, and although a lot of it follows the orthodox cycles of rise and fall, drummer Hausser's spirital momentum is divine enough to subvert expectations. The excellent recording points up the harshness of Leimgruber, though, he can be a bit wearing.

Charlie Mariano's Bangalore

Kindergarten *Kindergarten* (Jazz) 054 CD

My kind of world jazz. No pretensions to authenticity, even though most of the 14 players are from Bangalore itself — just a colourful, juicy, tropicallish, uplifting mélange of styles that creates its own planet out of a mouthwatering smorgasbord of ingredients. The "proper" Indian instruments are lined up alongside discreet electric bass and keyboards, and the tunes are endless washes of rhythm and harmony or bristlingly effective vehicles for voice and improvisation — the latter supplied by the ageless saxophonist Charlie Mariano, almost 75 when he recorded this but as inquisitive and inspirational as ever.

David Moss Time Stories *AFKAT*

054 CD

The records of this drum 'n' voice guy never seem like much more than notebooks, and this string of 22 duets offers no change. The partners are the usual list of vocalists and nose-makers, and it's all as mildly intriguing as you'd expect, but the final shot, a couple of minutes with Christian Marclay, the most creative mind on show here, is like a wake-up call to the rest.

Northern Lights Stillness In

The Solovka *Stillness In The Solovka* (Jazz) 054 CD

Cold and queer? One anticipates something from the Arvo Part stream of contemplation, but this evocation of the Solovka Archipelago in the White Sea is cantankerously hot and bothersome. Two Russians, Vladimir Miler (piano) and Vladimir Rensky (alto), meet a touchy old drummer from the Gambiaans, Ken Hyder. Beautifully played — free music of dignity, ferocity and eloquence, and pretty timeless at that. Good notes by Mr Hyder.

Sanctus Sanctus *SANCTUS SANCTUS*

054 CD

From New Zealand, and refreshingly short at 29 minutes, this debut CD is taking off from a rare precinct — the trio musics of Bobby Hutcherson and Walt Dickerson. John Blew's vibes find absorbing new trails in that most unexplored of jazz mini-genres, and there's worthy support from Patrick Bleakley (bass) and Chris O'Connor (drums). But there's a couple of jokey (and unfunny) pieces and one where Blew seems to be practising the trumpet, which leaves about 18 worthwhile minutes. That's quite enough for me.

Schama *ETTER SHAMBA 9600*

054 CD

A new generation of improvisers is upon us, gone is the delicate "sweet music" of the 70s, since guitar heroes like Pat Metheny got in on the act, this is the era of power improv, combustible noise energy closer to This Heat and Xenakis than jazz, perhaps. Schams — Eric Cordier and Albert Jean-Luc Guennet, plus drummer Eric Brubaker — use instruments such as bombardier, bagpipes, harmonium and fairly-gurdy to reinforce a kindness for stress. A promising debut, but at times, going along sleepier out too quickly. (Don Weinbaum)

Jeanette Wrate Echoes Of A

Northern Sky *Echoes Of A Northern Sky* (Jazz) 054 CD

Drummer Wrate's good lucks her Finnish/Norwegian heritage from the vantage point of Venice, California. Expressions like (and I'll have a cake later with that, please), the music is sincere and well crafted without getting as far as excitement. The best moments belong to Jeff Guether's violin.



Paul Panhuysen
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the compiler

New compilations: reviewed, rated, reviled

Once a storehouse of arcane new music at the dawn of the 90s, the Belgian Sub Rosa label is now more concerned with tracking the progress of today's fractured electronic. **Sub Rosa Sub Rosa** (Sub Rosa 160 CD) is a handy introduction to their absurdist universe, which encompasses the grimey, digitized beats and fuzz textures of DJ Gracchop and DJ Sinneroid, Jigjig's Bink and Bump & Grind vs Third Eye Foundation, the peachfuzzed (avagaze) meditation of Benja's "Electro-Organic Music 1," David Shea's gleaming Hispanic trumpet ambience, and a freestyle guitar doodle by Loren Mazzo-Gane Connors.

The CD opens with a sample of film maker David Lynch: "I like absurd things, basically," he intones, deadpan as you like. Before Lynch led his way documenting American suburbs with 'hideous' (don't) kids say the cutest things? condescension, his film music used to sound something like the processed noises of Joe Bank's Deformation project.

AI-Ahr (Ash International RRP ASH4 3 CD) picks sounds sourced by Bonks from signals picked up from the National Grid, power distribution networks, electrical storms and so on, and ties them against noises generated by a sequence of improvisations and sound designers including Tactile, Jim O'Rourke, Simon Fisher Turner and Lawrence Caserio. Best track: "AI-Ahr's Overdrive" featuring (Kevin Parker, whose saccharine-bomb bass brought us megastorm fumes over dirt-gray data noise).

Ash International and its affiliate label, Touch, are specialist dealers in audio arcania, but even they may balk at the prospect of **Pachinko in Your Head: Non-Linear Phunk** (Blue Rhino Studio 19004 CD), a field recording of a Tokyo pachinko parlor, a games room full of pinball-like vertical cases where thousands of ballbearing crash noisily through circuits marked out by nail beds. Packaged in a purple can, the disc plays like an electro-mechanical rendition of Lou Reed's *Phantom Planes* mix. Listeners are exhorted to discover "The imaginary rhythm ailer wing from the chaos of interfering sounds" while playing virtual pachinko on the Internet.

Wump's Children Thank U! (Foundry FROCD 2 CD) lends an ear to a small wave of British groups peering footling, challenging fumes of post-rock. The triple beats nupture of Rothko azide, much of the material is unfocused and unfinished. The Wisdom Of Harry Novak, Piano Magic, Jan and Electric Sound DJ Joy choose to work with limited means, but evidently they haven't got the nous to transcend them.

If the kind of post-rock featured above sounds like it has taken a wrong turning down an aesthetic dead end, the strain of 'twist' hip-hop featured on **Superspyr!** (Groove Attack GAP039 CD) is still locked to a fast track of future possibilities. The 18 cuts combine street-swing rap, the rhyms with multilayered midtempo backing tracks that team with isolated technological detail. A handful of known names jump out of the track listing (Maz DeF, Shawn J. Perod, Organized Konfusion), but the selectors are uniformly excellent.

The tipside to this kind of flowing understated hip-hop is provided by the latest instalment in The Wu-Tang Clan's **Wu-Chronicles** (Wu-Tang P251143 CD). As always, the raps, by Ghostface Killah, Raekwon, Method Man, GZA, et al., merge to sound both psychic and banal, hyperventilating routes full of brutal sex and casual violence, each one grungy across another of the RZA's sagacious, prime-energized capital tracks. Nasty.

In the Argentinean capital Buenos Aires, a small hidden network of "Isomir" Techno club regularly meets in private apartments to explore a mutual love of European electronic music documented by Remy Reinhold in the 1980s. Reinhold's compilation, **Electronica Musik Aus Buenos Aires** (Tone 1 CD), could be their club newsletter. Tinselt's "Horrorscore" recalls the animated litanies of House On Fire, while Yutopias's "Rise" and "Scare Band" parallels the futurist electronics of Nuno Canabarro's recently rediscovered gem *Plus Qu'Un Les Gervais*. "Clap 6" replicates the filter processing of Berlin's *Venueuse*. If it's not all completely engrossing, the surprise factor of its origins make it well worth investigating — a real Stachanovich-style apy on the moon!

Superficially David Byrne's Brazilian compilation **Belaca Tropical** (Luaka Bop 246275AB CD), conforms to expectations of South America. But Brazilian music regularly reveals itself by absorbing and acting on developments from elsewhere. Famous like Tom Ze, Gilberto Gil, Cielano Vives and Morsa Monte line up alongside relative unknowns. Even the most jaded cosmopolitans, sighing that nothing in the world surprises them any more, will be wrongheaded by the sampled Mancunian drud of Mark E. Smith opening Chico Science & Naqao Zumbi's rap track "Ras, Pontões & Overdressed." Nothing like a dose of northern drizzle to make the tropics really azide. *C Reviewed by Richard Henderson, Tony Hemmings, Bob Klay and Rob Young*

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Run by Allen Aynsman

Roster includes Smoggy, Mannequin Lung, Low Res, Mr. Heineken, Trash Aesthetic, Votek, Anderson

Description Underground electronics puber immersion to digital cut-ups

Brief history Founded in 1994 by Allen Aynsman and his then partner Joe Babylon. Initially set up for the purpose of releasing abstract pieces which had been rejected by the label they were contracted to at the time. PR soon began to reflect a far more wide ranging aesthetic. With each release, our microscopic following grew, and some distributors even began to take phone calls. After more releases on vinyl, Plug Research achieved its first commercial release in 2000, *Plug Research And Development*. Along with additional vinyl, there have now been two other well received CDs by Mannequin Lung and Low Res. The label has continued to explore new avenues such as the recent abstract EP with vocals, released by Shadow Huntz, produced by Trash Aesthetic.

Statement of intent Plug Research does not adhere to any particular style or orthodoxy, yet strives for a constant aesthetic vision. Although this has created some confusion, we believe that each release will reveal another facet of our concept of a new musical entertainment paradigm.

Other activities Organizing quality events in the Los Angeles area, bringing over electronic acts from around the world.

Future plans Voces In My Lunch Box, a two part vocal trix-competition, artist roster will include Jose Hodges, Chicks On Speed, Szpotnik & Bauer, the Cheap Guys, Smoggy, Echomorph, Pole and others. The release date will be 12 April 1999. Low Res and Mannequin Lung will be doing a small tour in Belgium and Germany for two weeks, along with Pole, Vanquiere and Substance.

Choice cuts Low Res: *Approximate Love* Box; Mannequin Lung: *The Art Of Travel*

(Imp and Insp: Allen Aynsman)

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multi media

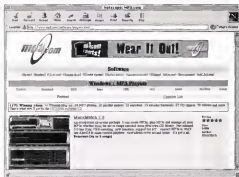
Rob Young reports on the format wars sparked off by MP3

In the absence of much earth shattering controversy in music at present, attention has focused on the 'format wars' accelerated by rippled decisions of digital sources. The latest chapter has been triggered off by three little characters: MP3. Currently the most popular, convenient and best quality sound file used to archive and transmit music, and sound around the Internet, MP3 is freely available software to encode stretches of music into digital form at one end, and to play the file back at the other. The music can be heard at something approaching CD quality (even though low telephone bandwidths and relatively small computer capacities combine to keep the actual resolution way below professional standards, meaning that a CD mastered from an average MP3 file would sound very poor indeed). To add to the hysteria, a new portable playback machine, the Rio, which can play MP3 files off small, water-sealed floppy disks, is already available in the US and Japan. At the moment, these hold around 40 minutes' worth of decent quality music, and cannot stop, although like all digital media, the capacity is set to rise at dramatically over the next few years. So, in theory, it would be possible for a bootlegger to make an entire chart album, say, available on a Website, which could be burnt onto a Rio disk and listened to, bypassing conventional distributional chains entirely. Though why anyone would want to do either is mystifying, it takes hours of tedious progress-bar-watching to convert that much raw sound into an MP3 file.

Through the efforts of Michael Robertson, MP3 is in the process of becoming a brand already labelled by the LA Times as a "Web impression", his MP3 Website (www.mp3.com) has become a hub of this burgeoning system, where surfers can obtain the free software that allows them to encode sound in MP3 files, and to listen back to the music once they've dumped it on their own hard drives.

But this ease of file transfer has caused a flapshoot between MP3.com and the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), the industry body that also raised hackles last year when it tried to put in place measures to make pressing plants police recordings for unlicensed samples. While the RIAA has gone on record to say that they don't object to MP3 files in themselves, merely the way they get used, they have failed to lift restrictions on artists who actively wish to make their music available in this form (The Beastie Boys and Public Enemy are two high profile examples of acts who have embraced the new medium as a potentially powerful promotional tool). Furthermore, RIAA are currently locked in a lawsuit with Diamond Multimedia, the San Jose-based manufacturers of the portable Rio player. This will prove a crucial test case, as at least ten other companies are on the verge of launching their own portable MP3 players.

The RIAA are often portrayed as the bad guys in debates on copyright and intellectual property issues, but in the case it's far harder to draw up the moral battle lines. Although the term 'MP3' has come to be associated with piracy in the popular imagination, everyone broadly agrees that the MP3 file itself is not inherently destructive — or at least, no more so than the cassette or CD. After all, there are already rebrands on the use of music whatever format



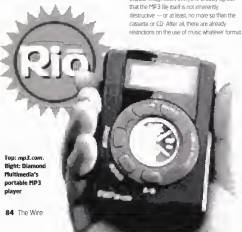
it's transported on vinyl, CD, even via radio. It cannot be broadcast at certain public spaces, nor be copied, performed, sampled or redistributed without permission, and exactly the same rules apply to music in MP3 format — it's the end use which is subject to legalities. The technology is also flexible enough to have regulatory codes inscribed within it, from digital watermarking — allowing a piece of music to be played a limited number of times — to tethering playback to a single computer.

Indeed, in December 1998 a new body was launched with high powers to deal with this whole area: Secure Digital Music Initiative (SDMI) is a coalition of companies who, for a piffling \$50,000 each, can sign up for a license to produce music digitally. In an event more sinister than RIAA Executive Vice President Cary Sherman, clearly a man who has never been moved by a piece of music in his life, declared at the first official SDMI meeting: "We intend to achieve an infrastructure that will support every kind of consumer transaction involving music in the future. In other words, consumers and content providers [ie artists] should have entirely new ways of making agreements for how they acquire and use music. We need all of the technology devices and networks to support that infrastructure by ensuring that the device will be able to read rights management information that is carried in the music and honour it."

A year ago, MP3.com locked horns with the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences (NARAS), the organisation responsible for the US Grammy awards. Grammy Magazine, NARAS's house journal, solicited advertising from MP3.com, and the company booked a page at full price, but when the publishers saw the copy they proposed to run — "What the whole world wants to... Future Grammy winners found here" — they suddenly got cold feet and pulled the ad, citing "the limited number of advertising positions available in the magazine in conjunction with the somewhat controversial nature of your product".

MP3.com themselves oppose piracy. The site allows independent artists or labels to post examples of their own music, at no cost, as a teaser to listeners to buy a CD. For every unit purchased via the MP3 site, artists are guaranteed a 50 per cent royalty, as compared to the much smaller cuts they can get from a typical record company. Because CDs and records tend to cost less when distributed this way, the theory is that buyers will have more disposable income to spend between a greater number of records — boosting, rather than threatening, the record market. The only sector that's set to lose out is, potentially, the major one. But it's difficult to imagine that the big consortiums will ignore the possibilities of digital distribution for long.

MP3's claim on the future is that it is currently the only 'open standard' audio format: no single organisation controls it, and the means to create and listen to it are as yet locked into specific hardware loops (like MiniDisc or DCC, which is set to be hardware made by Sony or Philips). Playback software is available for both platforms, PC (WinAmp) and Macintosh (MacAmp). Of course, as MP3 and its inevitable successors become a new standard (and they look set to do so, already there are MP3 capabilities built into Microsoft's PC operating system Windows 98, and the Internet. Javascript applications Shockwave Flash and RealAudio), they stand to make serious money themselves from their 50 per cent share of artist royalties. But until the day when MP3.com's own download statistics become the predominant barometer of popular taste instead of the traditional retail chart, they continue to solicit the most support and idealism of the DIY community, allowing musicians to deal directly with listeners, funneling a larger proportion of revenue direct to the creator, and offering the chance to enjoy and experience music with fewer geographical or access limitations than ever before. For now, and until the big shots march in, the likes of MP3 offer a relatively unexplored paradise for music-seeking Netheads. □



Top: mp3.com.
Right: Diamond Multimedia's portable MP3 player

GO TO:



Add N To (X) www.addntox.com

Self-styled adepts at creating practical uses for a useless science, London trio Add N To (X) have turned their Victorian space age visions to the World Wide Web. Floating links introduce their new Website, a cold grey, post-nuclear affair that's far more inventively interfaced than most group ident sites. Populated only by the occasionally appealing cardboard cut-out figure of keyboardist Jon Sherman, the site is heavy on Shockwave effects, with a dialogue between flickering squares, news pages with windows popping up all over the place, and an interactive selection of scrounging samples from their "Little Black Rocks in The Sun" if it wasn't for the Dalek vox that introduces each section, the site would be as mystifying as prewar home computers that offered no clue what to do with them once switched on.



Noise www.urban.jp/home/paula/home.html

Not the online home of Jacques Attali, more's the pity, but a personal collection of musical enthusiasms documented by New Zealand expat Paul Collett. An aficionado of the NZ underground garage scene as well as the avant rock roar of his current home in Japan, he has written cogent and intelligently posed summaries of both genres, as well as running a mail order site for Bruce Russell's Corpus Hermeticum label. With bags and record guides for figures such as Kaji Hanao, High Row and a PSF label profile, this is an accessible point of entry for neophytes, while those familiar with the music can enter a library of interviews culled from Now-zine, Ozmagnum

ROB THOM



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on location

Going live: festivals, concerts, clubs in the flesh

Peel Sessions Live: Coldcut/Masonna/Clinic UK: London Queen Elizabeth Hall

With Radio 1 boldly and rather incongruously announcing its presence at a gig whose undercard featured the shock tactics of Japanese noise-rock Masonna, John Peel began this instalment of his serial engagement with London's South Bank Centre by announcing, "Radio Zoo Ball brings you a genetically modified roadshow." Although the notion of Billie Martinizing into a high priest of psychotronic thrash is entirely satisfying, the results of the tweaked DNA on display here might give even Mamasita second thoughts.

Clinic, one of those utterly unbogging groups that Peel inexplicably takes under his wing every now and then, started things off with little more than a whimper. They know even less chords than The Feelies, and generated a similarly Welles-inspired, almost intense, WolfFartso drone. OK, they weren't tied in an unapologetic, opening-group kind of way, but their singular lack of spark destroyed the appeal of the music's surface textures. While the Queen Elizabeth Hall generates a rock 'n' roll atmosphere with the same force as its narrowside, the fact that Clinic had all the interpersonal skills of your high school physics teacher didn't exactly help matters either.

Masonna has even less chance than Clinic of accompanying The Backstreet Boys on the next completely organic Radio 1 roadshow. Judging by the shocked reactions of the handful of post-adolescents sitting in the seats adjacent to mine, that's no bad thing. Resplendent in the kind of bad-boy, black, secondhand attire you just don't see anymore, Masonna should have entered the UK air guitar championships held in Brighton a few days earlier. He played effects pedals without any guitars, thrashed about the stage like a drunk doing an Angus Young impression, and threw himself at his equipment.

Coldcut's Matt Black



like GG Allin in his prime. And the stagehands kindly brought out a table especially for him to graze about on. Even more entertaining than Massara's microphone chord-bonage antics was the bulk of covering heads, ears covered by hands, of the first few rows — singers bowing in fear of the god of pink nose.

Massara's choice of the damned was a mandatory blast on a par, at least in intensity if not brevity, with *The Descent* and *Wenceschroze* and *My Dad Sucks*. If Massara's performance was like watching a blood sacrifice, Coldcut's multimedia escapade was akin to watching Koyaanisqatsi with slightly more engaging music. Matt Black and Jonathan More did their usual audiovisual laptop schtick, a routine which occasionally fell flat on its digitally randomised face. A Coldcut set needs the enthusiasm of bodies in motion to keep it buoyant. Needless to say, this was not the case at the QEH With More wearing his trademark straw hat and Matt Black sporting a tacky sweater, they began with a snippet of Ronald Reagan denying the grotesquerie of hippydom, which soon dissolved into the kind of youth bewails that used to segue Silver's later songs. 20 years ago. Then it dissolved again into a Vangelis soundtrack. Things picked up with their statement of purpose "Beats And Pieces" complete with its crowd-pleasing jungle beat passage, and they managed to integrate live turntable tactics more effectively than in the past with some neat Mincam footage of Black getting loose on the decks. When they ran him footage — (Blake Turner, Timothy Leary, Sonny Boy Williamson, Venus Flytrap) — the union of sound and vision was impressive, but the animators were still way too close to the rave fractals of 1992. The low point, though, was some phutute John Philip Sousa march time with accompanying footage of New Zealand rugby players doing the Haka. It had all the foetus of an IV highlight reel. If genetic modification has no place in the food chain, new elements certainly have no place in music.

PETER SHAPRO

Below and far left: Massara



David S Ware Quartet/ Roscoe Mitchell

UK London Queen Elizabeth Hall

In February London experienced a thaw in jazz, frozen history. An appearance by the David S Ware Quartet came hot on the heels of a blow out (and sold out) duet by Cecil Taylor and Hsin Roach at the Barbican. Part of the Pulse season celebrating music of black consciousness, the Ware concert was greeted by a two thirds full QEH. For music deemed commercially unobtainable by both Jazz FM and the more powerful South Bank promoters — the event was promoted by the independent Joyful Noise — this was mighty encouraging. Improv deliberately eschews the limelight, free jazz has greater ambitions. John Coltrane's unfinished project still looms, heavy with political and spiritual agendas. A deal with Sony has enabled David S Ware to present a public, commercial face for a music that's survived by busking on NYC pavements and subways — with occasional concert space outbursts courtesy of the Koolhaas Factory or Disobey. The QEH, in contrast, is a space thronging with the non-views of official British Culture. Would our heroes cut it?

First on was Roscoe Mitchell, famed saxophonist with The Art Ensemble Of Chicago, in a duet with the Ware quartet's patterned Matthew Ship. Favouring an overblown, exaggerated screech, Mitchell announced that romanticism was out of key with the intensity of the evening. During an overlong, infiring soprano on saxophone, he tried entering's patience. It was a relief when he peaked and Ship could return from hammering support to supplying his wickedly apt note placements. Ship is an awe-inspiring, resourceful and electrically responsive partner. Rather than generating the serialist chatterboxes of Cecil Taylor, Ship has a free improviser's ear for the moment. His over-worked touch reinvents the phrase, avoiding the middle range for dark timbres, soft offcentre strokes, piano wet bings and hair-raising, two-note hand chocs. Timbres, as so venerated they could come from a piano "prepared" for a John Cage score. Mitchell was better on flute, his atonal intervals allowed. Ship to unroll a brittle, Boxy-like rocky of stunts and chrome reflectors.

David S Ware stated his intent with a theme that evoked the glory of late period Coltrane. Dressed in shiny white silk — a whirling dervish's frock and tail cap — Ware's apparel signified disdain for the neoclassical awe of the ecstasies of the Black Nationalist dash in carnival. Yet his quartet — Ship's ever alert piano drummer Susie Barron's asymmetrical metre expertise and magical rimbomb, William Parker's static bass riffing — is anything but a replica of Coltrane's. Some of the porno-besum interplay with Barron's array of percussive effects directing Parker's dizzying *duosonic* scawney, had the same concentration on the instant and fascination for texture associated with prime improv. Parker's powerhouse riffing leaves Barron with



David S Ware

polyrhythmic donkey work, allowing her measured and yet provocatively out-of-tempo cymbals to goad and spur the saxophone. The sense of overlaid time this created was gorgeous, and highly original.

Ware doesn't write tunes so much as arrange mini-dramas for his four musicians. Mighty floods of contrasted sound tip his soloists into new spaces. Towards the end of their first set, the quartet achieved the sense of joyous four part simultaneity unique to free playing. Both to minds constricted by the singularity of the concert. As in Herndon and Ornette this music relates to our psychosocial experience of the world rather than to our categorical intellect. Ware's importance is less as another link in a chain of great saxophonists insofar as he did deliver the analytical solos he's done on disc, favouring instead ad-libs and squeals or ripping honks, but in organising ensemble music in a new way. It's abstract, but there's groove and muscle and pump in evidence everywhere.

The second set was skewed by Roscoe Mitchell's contribution, ascending into a lake-no-prisoners holler. The resulting chaos was fun, but never attained the sublime four part clarity of the previous set. Though Ship and Barron framed Mitchell's end-of-pipe howls with astounded felicity, his derelict also began to bring about a scowling conclusion. The quartet limed with a crowdpleasing, litany vamp that had enough extra wiggles and fidgets in its cavernous trumpet to satisfy the most stringent

instinct for spontaneity and freedom.

Silk, the David S Ware Quartet wasn't quite the unspeakable ecstasy we hoped for. Maybe their star guests — and the pressures of a debut in a foreign capital — inhibited a musical alchemy that less self-conscious circumstances would permit. However, the courage to stand up and say this might be jazz — making the genre expansive and inclusive rather than retrospective and exclusive — is fantastically necessary. Like David Murray's Octet at the start of the 80s, David S Ware's Quartet has the brimming sound of a genuinely new approach, one that could also explode into a galaxy of wonderful musics.

RON WATSON

Input USA New York Planet 28

Like anywhere else, the US dance music scene has its problems. Despite the recent explosion in stylistic diversity, most American clubs offer access to the same homogeneous range of club musics — France House, two-step jungle, bag name artists performing mass appeal styles — and anything falling outside of this agenda gets confined to unimpressive "boutique" venues like art galleries and university basements. Even in a city like New York, where for decades musical culture has expanded to fill even the smallest cracks in the edifice of *afrik* conversion, the dance scene mostly suffers under its own

PHOTOS: COLLECTIF AND PULCHRA; JONATHAN WILCOX; DAVID S WARE: GILLY HENNETT

on location

paranoid weight. Where you'd expect to find a velvety rich sound of Q's who dare, you get the sad spectacle of DJs who dare to heed an interesting set being forced on discs placed on wobbly tables in out-of-the-loop puzs, whorped on by friends but ignored by most anyone else.

Input, a well conceived and (thankfully) well attended show-as-us-mustn'ts organized by Spunk Records featuring Ectomorph, Jim Serrano and John Seiwald, among others, showed why this needn't be the case. Not only was it a solid night of asidely experimental dance music offering something other than bludgeoning 909 kick drums or another 72 bar sparse snarl, it also doubled as a snapshot of what's interesting in North American dance music right now: US and Canadian labels like Swanton, Spunk, Schmatic, Suction Interdimensional Transmissions and Satellite are retranslating electro and breakdance culture for the post-Techno crowd, admitting the relevance of, say, Aphex Twin and B0B State while not forgetting Man Parrish and New Order.

Hold in Planet 28 — if you blinked you'd miss it's tiny tribune on a quiet street north of Manhattan's Chelsea area — thus marked the first New York appearance of Brendan P. Gilen, aka Ectomorph. Gilen, who is best further down the East Coast in Miami, first left his footprints in the sand with the four part From Beyond series of neo-electro EPs

released on his Interdimensional Transmissions label during 1997-98. Operating under the rider of everyone save fringe bedroom meers and acolytes of QJ estonica, Gilen and his label abandoned a sort of shadow, small scale revolution in post-Debut dance music.

Limited-run 12"s like *Dark and Absorption* featured wiggly girls of sparse B0B patterns and spectral electronics, undercut by cavernous, dub influenced bass, earning Gilen a strong reputation among scores of QJs, who nonetheless rarely removed his records from the back of their crates.

This night, however, there was no shortage of adventurous DJs willing to go off-label. If the first hour or so of somewhat mundane Techno started things off on a puzzling note, the music began to get weirder and more wonderful with a set from Basilisk's QJ Teep. From about midnight onward I found myself dithering between Input's two dancefloors in a manic attempt not to miss anything. *Chameleon* is a recent side project of David Moon (aka Spunkin' at Heri) and Stephen Macchione (aka Electro Music Specialist). Though they were forced to forgo monitors in order to keep the system from overheating, they still managed to pull off an impressive set of squishy, throw-heavy new school electro. Ectomorph's minimalist palette of just a few analogue devices and an over-powered B0B drum machine floated above a bank of flashing display screens facing the audience

Gilen and partner Erika moved straightback and methodically from knob to knob, cooing out airy, rhomboid versions of cuts like "Close To East" and "I Am Sitting In A Version." Local video artist Nico projected dismembered computer code and *Pop-Alike* latitudes onto the dusty bodies, creating images that aptly matched the vaguely ominous ribbons of sound malfunctioning in the room. The highlight of the set was a 20 minute rendition of "The Haunting" from Ectomorph's *Absorption* EP. He has like-dimensional crystals anchored a warping, deep space echo of melody ringing in and out of view among peering figures of machine percussion.

Spunkin's Kym "Sine Wave" Serrano was spinning downstairs during Ectomorph's set, which meant that many missed out on a hugely entertaining and consistently impressive QJ set. Well, maybe despite dodgy pitch control on one of the decks, the set was a solid two hours of cream-of-the-crop new electro, with Serrano working the fader just enough to keep things diverse without losing a dancefloor of the few hundred who probably weren't even aware of what was happening upstairs. Had they been told, they probably wouldn't have cared.

SAH COOPER

Roulette 20th Anniversary Benefit Concert

USA, New York Lincoln Center, Alice Tully Hall

"This isn't experimental music," the young man sitting next to me groaned during the intermission. "Experimental music is when you don't know what's going to happen. Everything's so predetermined here." Well, it's true that not much broke new ground at this benefit event for Jim Suley's longrunning performance space Roulette, but that's beside the point. For 20 years Roulette has been more concerned with contemporary composition than the experimental side of things. It has provided a gracious space in New York for many major composers, and more than a few minor ones. Now thanks to changes in local life laws, it has got to move, though nobody's saying where yet.

The only ground this concert at Lincoln Center's performance space was meant to break was in helping to fund its new location. For a normal Roulette show, the name is indication enough of the night's unpredictability. With tonight's high ticket prices (\$50 dollars, or 125 dollars including reception), a greatest hits selection was always on the cards.

The Lincoln Center crowd — somewhat older than the usual Roulette audience — was certainly willing to be pleased. Consequently, the bagged gun was wheeled out first. Steve Reich strided on stage with an associate, both wearing white shirts and black pants, pulled out his fabulous party trick, *Clapping Music* — a short rhythmic study for two pairs of clapping hands — executed in a steady and spit.

"It's a very portable piece," he explained later, no kidding: It was clean, crisp, elegant, and no doubt too familiar to nearly anyone in the audience.

Sheryl Shreeley's *States* (1996) isn't so well known. Impressive as it is, it's much harder to enjoy than, say, her deliciously unpredictable vocal improvisations. A portrait of a suburban Jewish woman of the 60s took in a huge state, it's a sort of audio-Cubist take on the thing. Berlin standst "Blue Skies," with Hirsch, backed by woozy tube collage, coming close to speaking in tongues. It's intense for sure, but the hall's boomy acoustics didn't let her air favours. Besides, when good art mistakes bad art (as Hirsch did at her scorching exclamation), it can be hard to tell from the real thing. The other vocalist on the bill, the ageless Meredith Monk, came off much better. She drew on her old pieces, *Songs From The Hill* and *Light Songs*, for some beguiling solo polyphony, before bringing on associate Kate Gessinger for a couple of a cappella duets, the pair of them trading off wordless peeps and nonsense syllables. Monk generally concentrates on large scale time/space pieces. Those days, so it was a pleasure to see her doing something small and airy.

John Zorn's jazz quartet Masada has supposedly finished the recording part of its career, which is a shame. Their discs, recorded years ago when they were still attached to the early Omotie template, don't do justice to the powerful, flexible group they've become. Loose, playful and hot, they've been playing around New York a lot lately — their engagement at the little downtown club Tonic the previous week was scattered with the sound of jaws hitting the floor. Here, though, they had more mundane problems with the acoustics. Joey Baron was gritting his teeth trying to drum quietly enough, and Greg Cohen practically nipped his fingers open trying to make his bass project. But they play so affectionately and respectfully of each other that they figured out how to work around it, each of them hanging back in obvious admiration for the others' solos.

The night closed with William Parker conducting his Little Huey Creative Music Orchestra of almost 20 musicians, in *Atonement's* *Arkestra* model, with composed sections seguing in and out of a mass improvisation. For the first time this evening it really was unclear what was going to come next — partly because the group was premiering a new piece, "Elegy For Fred Hopkins," but also because they sounded rather under-rehearsed even in the non-improvised sections. The fulcrum of the ensemble — as is often the case with every group that employs her — was percussionist Steve Berra, who held everything together with fluid lightning improvisation, then switched to a one-two tympani, bongo, and finally played Parker and pianist Cooper-Moore for an African percussive the Unleash as the piece was, it had the shocks of instant improvisation that can only come from indeterminacy.

DOUGLAS WOLK

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New music books: read, raved about, roughed up

John Zorn: Itinerari Oltre Il Suono

Edited by Walter Iovare & Carla Chiti

SONCRAPI/ITALIA: SONO PRODOTTORE €16.99

"Zorn is human! I think," writes Eugene Chadbourne, in a brief introduction to this bilingual, English/Italian scorebook of interviews, essays, reproduced scores and two wedges of archive photos. Coming from one of the subject's oldest and closest allies, Chadbourne's guarded opening speaks volumes about the public's wary treatment of Zorn since he ritualised his catalogue, demonstrating he was more than just a quick-waving a cucumber prescription for modern arts. Trace out his long journey on the hard shoulder of culture, from his close friendship with underground film maker Jack Smith, initiated by a screening of *Flaming Creatures* in 1968, and you realise the Bekers years, during which time Zorn acquired the reputation that ties in so neatly with his name (the angry, noisy resistor), is a short blip in the curve.

Zorn has elected to deliver his music in a succession of surprises nobody was looking for. The roads of this are glimpsed towards the end of the book, when Elia Trovati inserts a magical, scintillating and intimate first-hand recollection of Zorn's Theatre Of Musical Optics performances, which he began undertaking regularly from 1975. Often advertised only after they had occurred, these were small-scale affairs held in a blacked-out room in his studios on Lafayette Street in New York's Lower East Side, audiences never numbered more than 12 people, usually friends or acquaintances of the artist. For an uninterrupted two and a half hours Zorn would place an assortment of commonplace or foreign objects into a white-lit frame, juxtaposing, recombining and transforming them over time, to a taped accompaniment. Nowadays he effects a similar conveyor belt of wonders with the uniformed diversity of his Tzadik label CDs.

One of those Musical Optics "compositions" Patel was described by Zorn in 1979 as "my first experiment in the elimination of time". If Zorn spent much of the phase of his career chopping time itself out of jams, disorganising all the unnecessary temporal wastage of contemporary urban life (the Carl Sagan jumps and Naked City celluloid edits, and the hyperdense homologies of the *Spy Vs Spy* era), his current "mature" phase appears to be attempting to patch all that lost time back into

the equation. Thus the careful resurrection of his entire back catalogue on Tzadik, the weaving of a radical and unimpeachable music that will speak "to the Jews of today", and engagement with the disoriented avant-garde of a whole swathe of genres including minimalist electronics, the avant-rock/avant-jazz interface, and "altered traditional" musics from as far afield as Japan, Haiti and Central Asia. "The Jewish people have wandered for thousands of years," he tells Carla Chiti in a Q&A interview, "going to a country, assimilating and learning from this country and doing the same in another. In my opinion, my tradition is what I am... the music I create has no roots, in the same way that the Jews have no roots. They belong nowhere, they belong to nowhere."

From the splintered sound of Kristallnacht to the klezmer jazz of the *Musica Judaica* group, which is informed by tradition without being nostalgic, Zorn's unearthing Jewishness may yet come to be seen as his biggest godsend. Although many of the writers in this book tend to riff on the cut-up gamescape and Puffin question side of the work — the fast food of muso-theoretical fodder — Claudio Canali's "Shpil, Klezmer, Shpil" confronts and delineates Zorn's Yiddish blues. He writes, "Klezmer music is not like a tradition emerging from oblivion and brought back into fashion, but like a sound map buried in the atolls of Auschwitz. Its cheerfulness is undimmed from the very first chords that caress our ears, its joyfulness, its happiness is a figure dancing towards darkness, the *frumshyn*!"

There is a problem for anyone writing about Zorn: focus too closely on the cucumber allegor of *Cobra*, and you lose sight of the myriad film scores he has composed — exercises in narrative, time flow and visual cinelethi. Concentrate on his saxophony and you forget the exquisite chamber

compositions like *Rebirth*, *Duros* and *Duchamp*. As this book's format acknowledges, Zorn needs looking at with a fly's faceted eye, and provides plenty of terrain for commentators to fight their battles on.

The book is divided in two halves: first, a number of commentaries by Italian writers on aspects ranging from "Speed And Quotations" to Zorn's relationships to cinema and literature. In a section of Walter Iovare's perceptive article, "The Ear Of The Beholder", he shows how Kagel, Gadda and Staling back up Zorn's assertion that film music,

rather than 'straight' composers, has driven composition forward this century.

Then you get three pieces written by Zorn on Sam Fuller's *Shock Corridor*, Vigo's *L'Atlante*, and an affectionate memoir of Jack Smith. All three are laced with a farcical-like wrath that occasionally swells into unpeopled paragraphs of rant against the co-optation of art by big business. "A photo portfolio shows *big Zorn* (bebeep duck calls), connected *Zorn (hangin')* with *Lawell* (in Japan), *rusty Zorn* (conducting), *Turtur* *Gardner*, unrepentant *Zorn (Heside* in a graffiti'd *Durka* basement).

A second pictorial section contains fascinating insights into Zorn's scoring. *Rooshrunner* is a collage of photocopied snippets from *Wile E. Coyote* cartoon strips, and the written score looks for the most part like doodles done while hanging on the telephone. *Rooshrunner*'s sonic physicality leaps off the page and comes alive in your head, even for a non-musicalist reader like myself — notes morph into arrows pointing towards registers that can't be appreciated by the stage.

Despite years of enthusiasm like this, Zorn's play does not necessarily imply freedom. As in the novels of Georges Perec, his freedom is the latitude to serve under whatever rules he chooses. Since his self-imposed media blackout around the beginning of the 90s, when he renegotiated his relationship with the press (he told it where to get off), Zorn has reinvented himself as a more productive musician and curator than ever, steadily refusing the kind of obscurity that has characterised other public disappearances (see Krahwerk). This book usually stops some gaps in his thinking so far, and it's likely to be the most you'll get on — or from — Zorn for quite some time.

ROB YOUNG

Charlie Parker: His Music And Life

By Carl Woelke

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN PRESS PNB €13

The bebop revolution was the moment when jazz became self-consciously artistic, through a hard-edged, aggressive and ironic music, uncommercial and ultimately marginalised in popular culture. Though other players were important, Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie were the key co-conspirators. Parker became a legendary figure in his own lifetime, a towering influence on modern jazz, still revered only by John Coltrane. But as he enters the mists of history — now the generation he left prematurely in 1955 is dying



Charlie Parker



out — he remains elusive. In comparison to the extroverted Gato, Parker came across as profoundly conflicted, inscrutable as a Buddha. Apparently affable but laconic and modest about his abilities — certainly in the interviews cited in Carl Wodick's excellent book — his actions reveal a deeply tormented artistic genius.

At his peak for a few years in the late 1940s, Parker was probably the most phenomenal improviser jazz has ever seen — in fact, it's hard to see a rival in any music. But if his personality remains unfathomable, his musical achievement is now much clearer as a result of Wodick's book. Though it appeared in hardback in 1996, it seems to have been neglected by the critics. Hopefully it will get more recognition in this new paperback edition.

Though the focus is on the music, the book begins with a 50-page "Biographical Sketch" — the description's too modest, because some myths are convincingly laid to rest, not least the famous "Bird House" quote where Parker described his great breakthrough into "using the higher intervals of a chord as a melody line." If you read the discussion in Conrad Cori's recent edition of *Harmony With Legs Backs* you'll realise this is nonsense, and it's good to note that Parker never said it — jazz journalists Nat Shapiro and Nat Hentoff turned a paraphrase by earlier writers into a direct quote.

The traditional interpretation sees Parker as introducing harmonic complexity into the music, which then had to be broken down again in the 1960s by Coltrane and Miles Davis. Better to think of his advance as inflecting the improvised line with a wider range of "blue notes" than earlier players used. Yet, having debunked the origins of the myth, Wodick maybe still hankers after the traditional interpretation of Parker's achievement. This is just a suspicion, however,

in almost every way his discussion breaks new ground compared to earlier writers.

His coverage of the early recordings — before the breakthrough with Dizzy Gillespie in 1945 — is unprecedented. Parker's own insights into the music he created are given full credence. The crux of bebop was found in its rhythmic advance over the swing era style of the 1930s. Describing modern jazz, Parker said, "I think the music of today is a sort of combination of Midwestern beat and the fast New York tempos." The Midwestern beat came from his idol, tenor saxophonist Lester Young, the fast New York tempos were represented by Art Tatum and Coleman Hawkins. Parker was unique in being able to play both very fast and with a relaxed swing.

Wodick's illuminating discussion of his mature work leads to fresh appreciation. But a central claim of the book is that the alto player's creativity declined after 1950, not least for health and drug-related reasons. Increasingly he was content to coast in his performances. Wodick's argument here casts light on the very process of improvisation. He shows how Parker's huge repertoire of motifs or licks was deployed increasingly mechanistically — though still with a brilliance his peers couldn't match.

This isn't to say that Parker was reproducing practiced solis — part of the problem seems to have been that he stopped practising from the late 1940s onwards. One earlier solo where alternative takes are identical — suggesting pre-preparation — is the awesome alto break on the 1946 recording of "A Night in Tunisia." Quite exceptional even by Parker's superlative standards, we're not too upset to discover he must have played it through more than once. As Wodick writes, "This lack of variation does not take away from the brilliance of his solo break, no other instrumentalist in jazz at the time would have conceived of and executed that passage."

Wodick is full of interesting insights and critical good sense. He discusses Parker's unfulfilled aspirations as a straight composer, and the string ensemble which was the nearest he came — which is not very near — to realising them. His descriptions of Parker's radically new tone on alto sax are carefully thought out. "Cries of it, considered it shrill and edgy, while adherents found it fittingly dropped down and unimpeachable." Unlike his swing era predecessors, Parker's vibrato was sparing and he attacked most notes on-pitch and left them there. Wodick sees in the classic "Parker's Mood" the essence of the blues. "Certainly the combining of the earthy and the complex was one of Charlie Parker's biggest contributions to music."

As with Lewis Porter's equally magisterial book on Coltrane, non-musicians will skip over the detailed musical analyses. But Wodick is always clear and, except in these discussions, totally accessible. His sober treatment demystifies Parker without taking away from his genius. For the music, as opposed to the life, this is the best book on Bird.

ANDY HAMILTON



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Previous CDs by Dominic Duval on Leo Records (*Navigator* and *The Alexander Suite*) received outstanding reviews. The Equinox Trio with Tomas Ulrich on cello and Michael Jeffery Stevens on piano adds another dimension to his recording output. "What makes this output so remarkable, though, is not its sheer volume but its quality and diversity" (Stuart Broomer, liner notes).



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This new duo of Slava Guyvoronsky (trumpet) and Evelin Petrova (accordion & voice) will take new music scene by storm. One of 11 pieces on this CD, *Celestial Yaha*, was awarded with the special Astor Piazzolla prize for compositions in Italian city Castelfidardo in October 1998. Total time: 61'16.



CD LR 269 BRASSERIE TRIO
Musique Mechanique

Brasserie Trio is Carlo Acis Dato on reeds, Alberto Mandarini on trumpet and Laura Rossi on trombone. 12 pieces on this CD were recorded live in Pisa in December, 1998. The aim of this trio is to create music of quality which is fun to play and fun to listen to, with strong theatrical and visual elements which captivate the audience. Total time: 61'37

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out there

April's selected live events, club spaces and broadcasts



Spacemaster

On stage

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Appliance Art synth welders supported by Mute laboratories. Portsmouth Wedgewood Rooms (20 April), Oxford Zedac (22), Leicester Princess Charlotte (22), London The Garage (23), Newport T.J.s (24), Nottingham The Maze (25), Leeds Duchess of York (27), Manchester Roadhouse (28), Newcastle Riverside (31 May), Bristol Fleece & Frink (2)

Amhizooque Steve Argüelles and Benoit Debécq's improvised jazz/electronic hybrids. London Vortex (4 April), Chesham International Jazz Festival (5)

Christoph De Buhlon The Digital Hardcore label's white noise whirler hits the UK to play three dates. Newcastle Jack's Bar (13 April), London Current (14), See Club spaced and with zower! France's DJ Tesla at Nottingham Matt Cross (15)

Bushetomagus First UK tour—ette in six years for the New York noise/improv trio of Jim Sauter, Don Dietrich and Donald Miller. Plus support act to be announced. Glasgow 13th Note (18 April), Leeds Adelphi (19), London Spitz (21), Boro, 87155, 0171 392 9032

Calexico Frontier rock from this City Slang affiliate. All Country acts. London Improv Theatre (26 April), Manchester Roadhouse (29), Kilberry Country & Roots Festival (30)

Club Mix Artist Keith Power has created an event out of the 'head-on class' between the club scene and the art gallery. Using image, sound and movement, his work explores the shared concerns of artist, DJ and video jockey. His collaborators will include, among others, Asian Dub Foundation, DJ

Swarm, DJ Fresh, DJ Stylee and Holicrator. Birmingham The Drum (24 April), Barn-Jam, 0121 333 2444. London Happiness Starts with Asian Dub Foundation Sound System (1 May, 9pm–3.30am, 0171 236 4266). For more information about events, prices and workshops, tel. 0171 636 1930

Cornelius Brian Wilson-faired Japanese Itschmenger tours the UK. Bristol Fleece & Frink (19 April), London Scala (20), Glasgow G2 (22), Manchester Hip & Grape (23), London Peel Sessions at Queen Elizabeth Hall (24), Camber Sands, Bowle Weekender (25)

Crescent + Mash Springs + DJ Poesies Fundraiser for Bristol's annual free Ashton Court festival. Featuring the space rock outfit just signed to Swart! Group, and former Rpi, Rpi & Pencil keyboardist Sonjae. Bristol Louisiana, 1 April, 8pm, 03117 902 9312

Deftford Dixies Charles Hayward's regular sound portrait of his neck of the woods in South East London. Hayward's spoken orchestra will be augmented by vocals and scratch word interludes. London Albany, 16 April, 8pm, 06154 50 0181 691 4446

Experimental Audio Research + The Land Of Nod + Longstone Ocho Records host this London showcase. Headlined by former Spacemaster 3 head boy. London Upstairs at the Garage, 9 April, 55, 0171 607 1818

Goodspeed You Black Emperor! Montreal based multi-guitar elegists. London Improv Theatre, 21 April, 8pm, 0171 387 2414

The Hilliard Ensemble + Jan Casbard ECT double act arrive in the UK as part of a European tour to promote the new LP, *Phonology*. Cambridge King's College Chapel, 14 April, 8pm, 01223 357851

Instant Music Meeting Continuing this

series of experimental improv, with Enzo Rocco Loti Cadei, Gal Brand and Mark Sanders (17 April), Big Buddha and Gamelan group Segara Pudu (23), and Remote Viewers and Kenny Process Team (30) London Centurion, B 30-1 1pm, 0453, 0181 469 0536

Julian Joseph First in a South Bank series of century tributes to Duke Ellington. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 29 April, 7.45pm, 0181-08, 0171 960 4242

Keep 9 Multi-arts event featuring the cream of London's underground film makers and sound artists. This month's event features Dave Graham, Ben Bredt, Damian Abbott, Dan Powell, Holographics and more. London Anthous, 3 April, 8pm-midnight, 1614, 0181 986 1936

Kruider + Kazamov Dusseldorf post-rockers with a live BOJ hadron tour with support from Krautrock-inspired psychedelia merchants Karamov and local guests every night. Glasgow 13th Note (15 April), Birmingham Fins & Frink (16), Leicester International Arts Centre (17), Manchester Star & Gasser (18), Bristol Louisiana (19), Brighton Sussex Arts Club (20), London Garage (21)

Arte Lindsay This month's cover star, No Wave veteran and champion of bossa nova, on tour with a group featuring Melvin Gibbs, Dougie Bromie, Dave Moraes and Rod Gross. Birmingham CBSO Centre (23 April), Oxford St Bernards Church (24), Newcastle Playhouse Theatre (25), Liverpool Unity Theatre (26), Leeds Ink Centre (29), London Purcell (30), Brighton Space Berry Theatre (1 May)

The Monsoon Bassoon + Max Tonder + **Eutho** Psychedelic acid rock with support from Warp-affiliated leftfield electronic Max Tonder and the three bass action of Rebekah London Upstairs at the Garage, 2 April, 8pm, 55, 0171 607 1818

No Shoel Ninja Tune horses leave the stable door unattended, heading out for a full UK tour with a travelling coterie that includes The Herbatron, Rocco Planus, Mr Scuff, Dynamic Synopsoids, DJ Food and J Swinscoe. Sheffield University (13 April), Manchester Band On The Wall (15–16), Bristol Love Mountain (17), Cambridge Junction (22), Norwich Waterfront (23), Brighton Zip Club (27), Newcastle Riverside (29), Glasgow G2 (17 April), Aberdeen Glow (2)

Poeharta Return of Dave Draper's neo-big band project combining 'vargal' composers, inspired improvisation and some terrible puns! London Samuel Pepys (15 April), London Whores Arms (25), 0181 986 1059

Michael O'Neill *Abandon + The Irish Chamber Orchestra* Composer

O'Sullivan presents classical arrangements of traditional music and original compositions. London Barbican, 3 April, 0171 638 8951

From *Nat* award rock grooves and synth/theremin driven exotics from this Birmingham collective. London Garage (with Cha Cha Cohen, 16 April), Leeds Feast & Frink, (with MDK, 24)

Sound Check Four days of contemporary jazz in this urban art space, with a keynote set from Zorn partner Dave Douglas's Tiny Bell Trio (4 April). Other highlights: BassDrumBone featuring trombonist Ray Anderson (3), Steve Swallow Quartet (5), Glasgow CCA, 2–5 April, 8pm, 012 50310, 0141 302 0522

Squasquel + End On Turntable set from the breakfast boom turned funkster, with Asian agit to in support, and resident DJs. Canopus Yellow Newcastle Riverside, 30 April, 11pm–2.30am, 55, 0191 232 7880

Dave Thomas + Kevin Coyne The former Pere Ubu main plays with Andy Diagram and Keith Molau in his excellent Pale Boys incarnation, plus the rock veteran Coyne. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 8 April, 7.45pm, 0121610, 0171 960 4242

To Rococo Rot + Frigide Ittriche electronic trio from Germany dig into the UK for a co-headlining tour with the UK's chilled post-rockers. Sheffield Boardwalk (29 April), Edinburgh Carlton Highland Hotel (30), Leeds Feast & Frink (1 May), London Scratch at Water Rats (2), Brighton Pledora Hotel (3) Frigate also played at Manchester Night & Day (8 April)

Jon Wadhwa En-Hi, bassist turned World Music chameleon showcases his new LP *Deep Space*. Cambridge Junction (6 April), London Azzura (7)

Club spaces

A Rag Of Spoons Eclectic and experimental electronic, featuring live outfits. Clifton and Linnal. Glasgow 13th Note, 3 April, 9pm, 52, 0141 553 1368

Bubbliclub Tech-breaks from Matthew B, with guests Terry Francis (2 April) and Fernal Diagram (16). Brighton Space Club, alternate Fridays, 0655, 01273 606906

The Grunch Punk and breakbeats from promoters the Penny Panksters with guests T. Power, Free Nasty and Bim London. Fridays, 2 April, 0161 923 7922

Guzzard Second of The Weir's monthly club nights. The month: Digital Hardcore's mega-house-breakbeat artist Christoph De Bebaton makes a rare London appearance, plus a live 'cracked media' set from Mike Plateau soundscaper Dean Roberts and

Duling from The Wire Sound System. London Crossbar, 14 April, 8pm-1am, \$6/\$4, 0171 837 6900

Electro Magnetic Interference BN1 + Semiconductor present a multimedia event with live performances from Process, Jean Short, Stock, Hausen & Walkman ad project Dummy Run, Din and more. Brighton Sussex Arts Ballroom, 28 April, 7-11pm, \$2/\$1, 01273 323643

Haywire Acid House, electrofunk and HipHop from Andrew Weatherall, Keith Tinswood and DPM mixing champion DJ Quest of Love Human Nottingham The Bomb, 23 April, 10pm-3am, \$7, 0115 950 6667

The Hip Trip Phuture lounge from DJ Mingo-G and guests, who include Douglas Stewart (4 April), Andrew Dime (11), Belle & Sebastian's Chris 'Beans' Geddes (18), and Steven 'Westworld' (26). Glasgow Alaska, Sundays, 11pm-3am, \$3/\$2

Homage Insect-Based-based underground House session featuring live performances from Mark Herbert's Radooby incarnation, plus Cornet, London Spix, 16 April, 8pm-1am, \$6/\$5, 0171 392 9034

Juxtapose District Six present a night of light, mental electro, featuring Deepart, Mekamias and other guests. London Global Cafe, 19 April, 8pm-midnight, \$3/\$2, 0171 287 0858

Kentex Multimedia event featuring DJ sets from Porsonheads Andy Smith, Interference and The Psychonauts, plus a programme of new short films including a selection of European talent from Japanese cartoon specialists Manga London Scola, 8 April, 7pm-midnight, \$8, 0171 482 7166

Klinker Improvisation sessions featuring pianist Michael Lowes (8 April), guitarist Enzo Iocco with John Edwards, Alan Wilkinson and Hugh Metcalfe (15), Hugh Davies's invented instruments (22), Bob Cobbing and others (29). London Sussex, Thursdays, 0181 800 9200

Knomishie Live performance by Piano 'n' Magic, plus Robert Harrison/Mann, Drummond Bee, Horton Jupiter and Tom Total. Digging Klout grooves. London Upstairs at the Garage, 24 April, 9:30pm-3am, \$5/\$4, 0171 385 6171

Leat Pure percussive Techno from past and present Underground Resistance members Jeff Mills and DJ Relando, alongside Steve Bicknell and Kirk DeGorrio in the chitlout room. Central London location, 4 April, 10pm-5am, live 0171 791 0402

Movement Tough drum 'n' bass from Ray Keith and Bryan Gee. London Bar Rumix, Thursdays, 3pm-3am, \$6-£3, 0171 377 9494

NY Sushi Future beat science featuring DJS Hyde, L Double and Dynamic 12 (April), Andrew Weatherall and Das Sound (9), Short Records (16), Proprietors, Richard Thorne and Jumping Jack Frost (23), Bobe Susa (30). Sheffield The Unit, Fridays, 10pm-3am, \$8-£6, 0114 267 1869. Sushi also head

south for a night, with sets from Freddy Fresh, Red Snapper Sound System and Tom Middleton. London Scola, 30 April, 10pm-4am, \$10, 0114 267 1869

Numb Themselves Harris plays this Northern Ireland chided electronics gathering. Bamber Bridge Homeown H-H, 4 April, 8pm-1am, \$5, 018206 69509

Open Kosmische crew present Jack Beckett & The Beggar's, plus experimental electronics and post-rock on record. London Grove IV, 30 April, \$5/\$4, 0171 385 6171

Pervented Science Dead destroying deavants The Scratch Pervents, Steve Faulkner and Req headline an evening of HipHop and mutant electro. London 333 Club, 16 April, 10pm-3am, \$10-£6, 0171 739 5349

Quadraphunk Underground House and hi-tech funk from residents Rick Hopkins and Andrew Curley, and guests Russ Gabriel and Seaway. London Crossbar, 16 April, 9pm-3am, \$5 (free before 10pm), 0171 837 6900

Ramsey Rephrase Records head north with DPM Krew and Cyclo live, and a DJ set from Lee Wilson. Sheffield City Generation, 24 April, 10pm-4am, \$15/\$6, 0114 281 2050

Stack Sabbath A different take on the day of rest with DJs Plute and Deadonout, with live sets from The Downs, and Wisdom Of Harry (11 April), and Headlesskicks (25). Brighton Arts Club Ballroom, 7-11pm, \$1, 01273 779411

Sonic Mook Experiment Disastronaut hosts an experimental room at this weekly fall-on club session, with DJs including Semiconductor, Subtropic, PM Scientists and more (3 April). Soymann's St Begg, MDK and Havy (10), Paddington Brooks, Jaxell and James Lavelle (17), and Project DARR's DJ Hia (24). London Scola, Saturdays, \$10 (£8 before 11), 0171 833 2022

The Spewel Innovative weekly best sound session. London's finest visiting Techno includes Asakiri To 30's Am Shien (1 April), St Brigg and Phoenix (8), Guao Zen and The Kaleidoscope (15), 10 So Nani and Oymyria (22) and DJ Mike from Japanese label HS-Cam (29). London Global Cafe, Thursdays, 7:30pm-midnight, \$3/\$2, 0181 568 3145

Stupid Puma Featuring Third Eye Fountain's live (1 April), and Live Human's DJ Quest (15 April). Newcastle Jak's Bar, 8pm, \$3, 0191 232 2417

Vector.com Noise, freeform electronics and graphics hosted by Leeds's Team Doyob, hooking up with the Termitic Mike's Michael Cough, Joe Gilmore and Scarscape. Leeds Mix, 4 April, live, 0113 735 7994

Viva Zapata, Viva Rave Insurgent musical electronics on a Latino and leftist lull, held in honor of Mexico's Zapata revolutionaries. London ICA, 23 April, 8pm-1am, \$5/\$4, 0171 207 4094

Wicked Electric 'Alternative' club session featuring DJs from Don Train Sound System. Huddersfield Abrahams, 10pm, 10 April, 2am, \$4, 01484 542967

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BBC Radio 3 9A-9P FM

Jazz Century: 1959-Present Saturdays 6pm Weekly survey of jazz history. This month's features: *Westend Jazz* (3 April), *Joe Of The Jazz Vocalist* (10), *Big Band Tradition* (17), *Chamber Jazz* (24)

Planet H Saturdays 10:45-11:30pm New slot for this eclectic mix of music and discourse from Robert Sandall and Mark Russell. Featured this month: *Dango Raps* (3 April)

Jazz On 3 Sundays 11:30pm-Jam Modern jazz recorded in concert, this month: *Max Roach & Cecil Taylor* (3 April), *Dango Bates Quartet* (24)

World Music Sundays 11:15-11:45pm Ethnic explorations via field recordings

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BBC Derby 94.2/96.3/104.5 FM, 111.6 MW

Soundscape Sundays 3-6pm Ashley Franklin plays instrumental electronics, contemporary classical/symphonic music, New Age and Ambient

BBC Greater London Radio (GLR) 94.9 FM

Destruction In Wednesdays 8-10:30pm Ross Allen spins a motley, morphing selection of new music, from speedy jazz and minimalism to electronica and leftfield pop

Charlie Gillett Saturdays 7-9pm Rock, roots, dub, World Music, blues, R&B and more sounds of the city

BBC Lancashire 95.5/103.9/104.5 FM, 85.5 MW

On The Wire Saturdays 12-2am Steve Barker's was new Music mix: dub, experimental electronics, out rock, free improv and more

BBC Manchester 95.6 FM, 146.9 MW

The Late World Noise Sundays midnight-2am Out rock, psychedelia, Jungle, avant garde, warped Ambient and global gems in themed sequences

BBC Scotland 92.4-94.2 FM

From Boogie To HipHop Wednesdays 8-9pm David Sellers drops jazz and new beats

Beat Patrol Sundays 8-9pm Peter Aspin plays independent music across the spectrum

Electro Saturdays 9-10pm Marc Perceval aims the latest Techno and dance tracks

Cable Radio 99.5 FM (Billion Keyans)

The Garden Of Earthly Delights Fridays 10pm-midnight Shane Fountain's blend of avant rock to electronic eclectica, with beanie soundbites

Kiss 100 FM (London)

Ravelli Wednesdays 10pm-midnight New drum 'n' bass

Give It Up Wednesdays midnight-3am Weekly guest mixes

Colin Dale Thursdays 10pm-midnight Minimal Techno and concrete House

Frost and Haze Fridays midnight-2am More breakfast that's chills the most

The Chill Out Zone Saturdays 6-8pm Paul Thomas's experimental electronica mix

Patrick Forge Sundays 8-10pm Eclectic jazz-not-jazz mix

4 Hero Sundays 10pm-midnight Jazz Jungle, cyber-soul breakfasts, electrified grooves from the Reinforced duo and guests

Sust 107 FM (Brighton)

Totally Wired Daily 11pm-1am Eclectic selection of leftfield independent/dance tunes, laces with 80s/70s backbeats

The Chill Factor Sundays 5-7am Dave Coskies continuous mix of drum 'n' bass, dub, psych-HipHop, classical, improv and electronics

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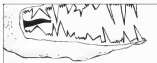
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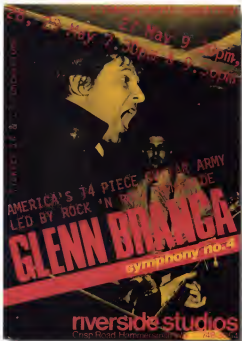
Glenn Branca shows **Robyn Rimbaud** the best night of his life

"Tonight the skies will grow dark over Hammersmith", said the preview in the London *Islands* magazine. The short paragraph of text was accompanied by a photograph of an almost messianic-looking figure, mouth wide open in ecstasy, a guitar thrown around a skinny neck, a scruffy jacket with the collar turned up in obligatory punk rock fashion.

I recognised his name. I already owned an imported copy of Glenn Branca's recording of *The Ascension* on New York's 99 Records, which I had bought after reading a review that signed off with the unforgettable line, "Nobody was ready for this... MOVE MOUNTAINS, IF NECESSARY, TO OBTAIN THIS RECORD!" For once, the hype was justified. I listened with astonishment to this record of massed electric guitars moving in unison. So by the time Branca made his first UK appearance at West London's Riverside studios in May 1983, I was already a disciple of this self-styled rock 'n' roll renegade.

The concert was on a Saturday, so school was not a problem, and I knew that I would get off work — my weekend job at the local library — in time to make it over to Hammersmith to buy a ticket. I wanted in line with a diverse galaxy of characters: the sophisticated, cosmopolitan art mob, women in horn-rimmed glasses, couples in tweedies and mohicans, leather jackets and Doc Martens everywhere. I knew no one.

I sat in the front row alone, nervously reading the programme notes, trying my utmost to look cool in an old school blazer and spiky blonde hair. The lights dimmed. Branca shuffled onto the stage clutching a bottle of Coca-Cola, a dishevelled apparition looking nothing like the illustrious figure I had envisaged. He was accompanied by ten impossibly bohemian-looking musicians, who assembled around a series of coffin-shaped wooden boxes laid out on trestles. These were their instruments, Branca's customised Mallet Guitars, kind of hammered dulcimers fitted with electric guitar pick-ups. The rest of the instrumentation was more conventional: an organ, drum kit and bass guitar. Rows of amplifiers wallpapered the rear of the hall.



The group was scheduled to perform Branca's *Symphony No. 4* (Physics). Each of the symphony's three movements began with a rumbling wash of sound punctuated by chiming chords that crashed and leapt angrily against one another, building to the most extraordinary sustained climax, with percussion forcibly entering at the apex. Branca was seemingly possessed, inside the music, waving his hands in the air, conducting the mass, spang from his bottle of Coke and then throwing its contents over his sweating head, using his entire body to direct the composition. The absurdly lanky guitarist Thurston Moore span his head round in time to the music. Lee Ranaldo sent hammered patterns racing across his guitar, and Barbara Ess, of *Just Another Asshole* magazine,

generated rumbling bass signals that seemed to explode in the pit of my stomach.

I sat transfixed as these haunted figures merged into one unit, dissolving and directing the sound out into space. It was a performance the like of which I had never seen before. It drew me completely inside the music. As the group built its sustained highs, then receded, then reached higher and higher, the onslaught evolved into an experience that was truly awe-inspiring.

I felt as if I had experienced an authentic symphony of the streets. Hearing the monochromatic textures of rock fused with classical polyphonic grandeur in the most brutal fashion, I genuinely felt as if something had mutated inside me. Attempting to convey this experience to a schoolfriend who accompanied me to the group's second performance the following evening was futile. He left midway through, returning home to his Hawkwind and Tangerine Dream records. I felt misunderstanding. How could I share this spectacle? The answer would come later, when I began to follow the trail laid by these two performances, and which led me to the music of Edgard Varèse and Terry Riley, the brusqueness of the Futurist movement, as well as Branca's contemporaries in New York's No Wave. DNA and Lydia Lunch, Sonic Youth, Sizzurp. Few performances would ever have the same impact again. Rhys

Chatham at the ICA a year later, Ernst-Zenende Neubauten at North London Polytechnic, an appearance by Barcelona's La Fura dels Baus in London's Docklands.

Interestingly, no recordings exist of *Symphony No. 4*. It is the one major work that is missing from the Branca canon. But as magnetic tape is nowhere near as compelling a retrieval system as the memory, perhaps, for me, the absence of this amazing work from the album racks is a good thing.

When I arrived home after that first night, my mother asked me how the concert went. I smiled shyly, and attempted to explain why it had been the most important evening of my life. "Oh that's nice," she replied. "What a weird son you are, Rob." □



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